THE DAY OF SOULS

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THE DAY OF SOULS

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From

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Warren

THE DAY OF SOULS

A Novel

By
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CHAPTER I

In the shelter of the narrow balcony which overhung the stairs leading to his lodgings above the Family Liquor Store, Arnold kissed his bride-to-be; he held her against the cold railing, brushing the hair from her eyes, a curiously remorseful rapture on him at the touch of her warm lips, the remembrance of her helplessness, her fears, her trust. The lights of the city down the hill were on her face, the gray Jew town stared at her through the slant of the rain—it was monstrous under the dark. The little mountain girl clung to the man, hiding herself from the portent of the unknown city, the evil shapes of the trades fogs stealing from the sea. Through the mumble of the night the Lime Point fog-horn moaned.

Arnold looked down at the girl's head, he twisted a wisp of her fair, damp hair, wondering at the fight within him, the sweetness of this faith against the knowledge that he did not love her.

"My little picture girl," he whispered, his gentle jesting giving way before her distress; "you do care, don't you?"

"But I can't go to your rooms," she answered, through half-sobs, "no—not till we're married."

"Sylvia, in San Francisco no one cares what you do.

I just thought you'd want to fluff your hair. See, this curl's wet—and this—and this prettiest one of all! I just wanted you to look your best for that crazy crowd at Sedaini's, where we'll dine."

His right hand slowly withdrew from his trousers pocket. He had no money—nothing. Their clothes were damp with fog; the girl trembled in his arms; again she murmured: "No—no. Wait—I couldn't!"

"I'll stay outside if you'd rather," he answered, in a strange simplicity for him—a dark, lean-faced, faultlessly-dressed young man of the city, politician of the street, idler of the midnight, a "rounder" the town would have told you. "Kid, I'll do just as you wish all my life long."

Above her rain-wet cheeks her gray eyes smiled gratefully; always his gentleness won its way with her, and laughing, he clasped her and ran up the remaining steps to the door that faced on Happy Alley.

"No—no," she protested; "John, we mustn't!" but, laughing still, feeling a delicious novelty in her reproof, Arnold placed her through the doorway and, bending, kissed the gloved hand he held. He had a secret love of the theatric, glossing it over with his belittling humor. Then, closing the door he stood without in the drip from the ancient gable, looking down Washington Street to where a blur of water-streaked lanterns and the snarl of gut and kettledrums from a green lattice on Portsmouth Square set forth the wedding of Wo Hop Loey, the fish merchant

"Why can't you love her?" he muttered. "She's good and fine and true—the only true thing in all your life—and nothing stirs you—*nothing!*"

And through the fog-drift among the mountains to the north he watched a single star, it was from there she had come—the country-up-in-back beyond the Mendocino Ranges and the cloud-wrapped coast.

The girl within the room turned up the dim gas and looked about, sniffing the smell of tobacco, leather, gun oil, rose-leaves and liquors which was not unpleasing. Beyond the light she made out a long table, a huge sideboard, a black old piano, and on a couch a Mexican serape, with broad bands of red and green vivid in the gloom.

Over the furniture and on the floor were scattered books, magazines, sheet music, neckties, hats, pipes, tobacco-boxes, glasses and decanters. Apparently nothing was ever set aright. The old sideboard held dishes of exquisite coloring, silver and ware of oriental lacquer; on the table was a brass brazier across whose top were the dried stems of a dozen roses whose petals were falling upon a type-writer; from the portfolios and music sheets on the piano rose a reproduction of *The Marquise,* but the marble, like everything else, was dusty and hidden in all sorts of careless accumulations. The walls were hung with Aleut baskets, Iggarote war clubs, Moro head-dresses, bolos, spears, grass-plaited arrow cases, and—in a cleared space—was a dirty cavalry saddle with ragged boots, a saber and the silk guidon of a troop. Beyond was a hodgepodge of amateur water-colors, indifferent oil paintings, dulled photographs of men and women, camps and horses, ships, houses and landscapes; while in the farther corner, by the gloom of the chamber, an immense and

hideous Chinese god of gilt paper and tinsel cloth was staring at the country girl.

She watched it for a while, half-apprehensive that the malignant face would move, and then murmured: "No, it won't harm me—it's his—everything here is *his*—his home—*ours!*"

Sylvia Spring turned to glance in the mirror. She was small and fair as a woman in a story, with adorable prettiness; her face, delicately pink to the ears and the wayward light hair—a demure, merry little face with eyes now gravely gray, but which had, in the sunlight, a gleam of the sea's green. And she was gowned in the very smartest that Trinity County could muster for the astonishing romance of its South Fork heiress and the city fellow who had wandered over the mountains last summer to put on the "home talent" production of *Pinafore* for the benefit of the Ladies' Aid of the Methodist Church. It was there she met him—by the third rehearsal she had discovered that he was a marvelous person; and he that she owned three hundred acres of redwoods near Camp Nine, where the new railroad was coming.

It is something to have a sweetheart over whom all the other girls are "crazy." Sylvia, the orphan of a country minister, had never possessed one, and here, now, was this lithe stranger with the inscrutable eyes and grave speeches of whimsical impracticality; here, without effort of hers, choosing her from all the younger set of the Ladies' Aid; and at the end of five breathlessly happy weeks he had told her that he loved her! Wasn't it all wonderful—most wonderful?

How was it that he, John Hamilton Arnold from the

"City"—and she had never seen a place bigger than Eureka, where the logs are hauled to tide-water—a fellow who had been a student at the university, and a cavalryman in the Luzon and Peking campaigns, and about the world on a troop-ship; who had sung in the Tivoli grand opera chorus, and had once "gone ahead of a show that went broke at Kansas City," all of which happened in some mysterious, romantic past of his—how was it that he should wander into the green wilderness of northern California, happen on the impoverished Ladies' Aid, and then discover her to love—love—*love?*

She couldn't understand it—"Jack" Arnold, who knew all the great people in the world, and had seen all the beautiful women, most surely! Ah, well, he had asked her to marry him, and here she was after sixty miles of mountain trails to the railroad, then to Eureka, and then by the *Corona* to San Francisco, where he met her at the wharf and brought her up through the brawling streets, the splendor of the night, on a cable-car that clanged and clamored along a mighty hill and shot them forth on a wet, north slope of the bewildering city. One didn't need to know,—one could just trust when one had a lover like this—so sure, so strong, so superior, that even down-town in the jeering hubbub, under an avalanche of lights, rocked in a sea of hurrying faces, he could pause to be gentle, to be kind and merry, asking of her comfort and buying her a bunch of violets. Now, standing before the mirror in his room, she crushed the violets against her beating heart and stifled her pride in him, her joy to be alive, her gratefulness to God.

The ways of her life had slipped, the huge world had engulfed her; she could only cling to him, believe in him, love him. She stared at the misty eyes of the girl in the mirror, finding now that her lips were moving in a prayer: "O, God, make me good, very good, and help him to be good—but I *know* he's good!" she broke in with a sturdy little defiance of some of the doubts the Ladies' Aid had held concerning a man who had been in the "show" business, a soldier across seas and a wanderer at home.

She fluffed the last girlishly wayward bit of hair, and straightened the little blue jacket that the dressmaker in Eureka had evolved from a whole pink sheetful of Parisian creations. Beneath the jacket, pinned to the bodice, was a needle-case that contained ten thousand dollars in new bills.

"You'd better have Mr. Arnold deposit the money at once, dearie," said the wife of the president of the South Fork Lumber Company, after Sylvia had signed the papers which gave half her redwoods to the mills. "What bank does he deal through in the city?"

Sylvia did not know. John Hamilton Arnold, himself, would have been puzzled by the question. Just now, in the rainy dark of the balcony, as he waited for his bride-to-be, he was absently tearing up a pasteboard.

"Bluebell at six to one," murmured Mr. Arnold. "I wonder if the mare has got hon e yet?"

He was thinking it rather a pity that his country sweetheart had come this unlucky afternoon when the book-makers had happened to "break" him. When he met Sylvia at the wharf he had had twenty-five cents—

ten for car-fare and fifteen for her violets. And then to-night was the light-weight fight at Woodward's Gardens for the championship of the world; and though he had no money he and Louis Ferreri, the slot-machine agent, could get box-seats from Supervisor McDermott, or Deputy Sheriff Ja. . Holman, or any of the city hall "push," through whose favor the sport flourished; or even from Jimmie Kaufman, himself, clerk of the superior court, and impresario for the pugilists, who was always amenable for passes when approached by one who had political backing. And "Hammy" Arnold was "close up" at the city hall, it was said; closer than any man to Police Commissioner Stillman, who dominated the night life of the town.

Upon his reverie, as he watched a cable-car rising along the hill street above the humming slot, with a flitting aura of yellow light showing the grass tufts between the cobbles, to vanish in the cloudy heights above, came Sylvia with a pleasing suggestion of violets and women's scented stuff. The little blue hat, matching the jacket, was roguishly atilt over her hair, which still held a rain-sparkle here and there.

"My picture girl!" he cried again, and bowed with that grand raillery which puzzled her, but at which she always laughed; then kissed her hand with the curious humility that puzzled her still more. "Now, we'll dine. You mustn't mind the crowd down-stairs, if they stare. They're queer, but you'll like some of them—Sweet Mellody, and Sammy, the fat, freckled poet who can write anything under the sun, but can't get it published."

"If they're your friends, Mr. Arnold," Miss Spring said adorably, "they're all right, I know!"

"Mary Mellody is lame and she's a shop-girl at Solinsky's, but if Sammy ever gets a few epics and things on the market he's going to marry Sweet Mellody, because she's not strong enough to work. We laid that out to Sammy long ago!"

Sylvia laughed as they went down the rickety steps. A single gas light at the corner of Happy Alley showed the front of the Family Liquor Store, in the window of which was Unc' Pop Radke's fly-specked pyramid of paper whisky cartons. Arnold opened a side door, lifted his bride-to-be down a step, and she was in—a saloon!

From among gray casks uprose Unc' Pop, a dripping measure of red wine in one hand, his apron a dull purple from many apoplectic pulls at the siphon with which he coaxed the raw claret from the bungs. The bar of the Family Liquor Store was no bigger than a bedroom; the green-topped card-table, the lunch shelf with its cheese cubes, blood-wurst, crackers and mustard pot, the vast wine tuns and steam beer barrels took up most of the space. The back bar mirror was draped in pink net with gay butterfly calendars pinned to the voluminous folds, while below was Uncle Pop's solemn array of case goods—Vermouths and Chartreuses and Picons which no patron of the Family Liquor Store ever drank, not even Louis Ferreri, the slot-machine man, who had a diamond in his watch-fob and two in his cuff-links, to say nothing of his scarf pins, and therefore should know what was in bottles formidably inscribed and warranted. On this back bar were Uncle

Pop's glasses, graduated like a decent family out for an airing, the big aldermanic *biers* leading the way, the ladylike punch and clarets, with graceful stems, following, the ports and sherries, like school-girls, less full-bosomed; while behind toddled the waistless whisky "ponies" and the stubby-legged liqueurs and cordials, an infantile crew with shining faces striving to keep pace with their elders.

"O, John—a *saloon!*"

"Don't you mind—it's only Unc' Pop's, where the cat sleeps in the cheese box."

The grocer parted his vast mustaches to word a protest, but it was only after the two had closed the lace-curtained door to Sedaini's café that Unc' Pop was able to evolve his repartee and then he bawled: "Monkey-tootle pizness—vy don'd you pay vat you owe herein?"

The country girl faltered again on Sedaini's sawdusted floor. She was by another miniature bar, behind which sat a pock-faced Italian, bulbous as a toadstool on his high seat. In Sedaini's there were six small tables, besides the long one in a sort of recess by the kitchen, each with flimsy cotton clothes and heavy china and dismal cruets. The walls and ceiling were of dirty plaster, cracked and eroded; and here and there were doubtful pictures, scrawls and daubs, while immediately above the wainscoting innumerable lithographs had been stuck on and peeled off, year after year, until the area was a splotched and fly-specked rout of colors and figures—the limbs and faces of actresses a generation gone; fierce, epauletted Garibaldian generals; gunboat encounters of the Civil War; prints of Italian harlequins; advertisements of Nea-

politan steamship companies; employment agencies; politicians' pamphlets of the Dennis Kearny era; cigar and liquor calendars; pictures of prize-fighters and severe statesmen from ancient weeklies—a disastrous and slovenly mélange. The neat little country girl drew her skirts closer from the sawdust, where a stubby-eared cat was chewing a *salami* rind, dismayed indeed!

At Sedaini's you could dine for two-bits or four-bits. Nearly every one dined for two-bits, not so much on the score of penury, for sometimes even Sammy Jarbo, the laundry route poet, had half a dollar, but because there was not a radical difference in the menu—not such a one as to warrant a Lucullian nicety of extravagance. You got the same vegetable soup—*menestruui*, the same *salami* and grated cheese and entrées—except, if a four-bitter, you could have *raviolis*—and the lettuce Romaine with garlic; and then the two-bitter was cut off from the roasted chicken and the anchovies, and Henri would not bring you the *zabaoine* and would scowl if you—a two-bitter—ordered the kirch or cognac. But with either you got a whole bottle of red wine, and the sapient two-bitter, by sliding his empty bottle under the table and kicking it cautiously under his neighbor's, could protest he had not been served, and delude Henri into bringing another. So time honored was this practice that Sedaini's patrons had long since kicked all the varnish off the wainscoting; and, when detected, equally honored was the joke of Henri, the greasy-brained Gaul:

"*Bien?* Nex' time, M'sieu, we connec' you wiz ze pipe-line!"

As it is always for the hungry man to laugh at the

baker's jest, so would the two-bitter roar; and Henri, if placated, would produce the second bottle all for twenty-five cents.

When Arnold and his mountain sweetheart—Sylvia was too far a-whirl in the adventure to protest—tripped past Sedaini's bar, the place was vacant except for a group about the long table in the rear, and a waiter at one of the small stands where he poured him red wine from a cracked agate measure, and broke a huge loaf. The people about the large table were in a wrangle. From the curtained box window facing the street, where was the sole display of Sedaini's café, Henri had brought a gay salad—beets and cresses and onion tops and garlic greening over a vast cone of fish and lobster. To each guest in turn he offered it; they looked suspicious: one smelled it; one shook his head, and a fat red-headed boy poked a finger into the mayonnaise.

"That salad, Henri," said he, "has been in the window a week—the cat has slept by it since last Sunday on the same comic supplement."

The waiter protested; again, to each guest he offered the salad. In despair at their refusals, he retreated to the front, and, depositing the dish, conferred with the pock-faced proprietor. Again, from behind the dirty lace curtain, Henri expostulated; and then, with Sedaini advancing majestically in silence on the table, he brought the vast, rubicund salad.

The proprietor pleaded.

"Eet eez good salad—I make heem yesta—this afternoon—da good lettuce I buy—"

And the table, roaring at him, cast anathemas on the salad. The proprietor protested, objurgated; he called

on the saints, and Henri, the waiter, to uphold him; he put the dish on a chair, the more fervently to apotheosize his handiwork, and one of the guests—the young man with red hair and large ears—deliberately raised his foot and set it upon the venerable salad. Gone was its usefulness. The proprietor wept.

"Charge it to Arnold," said the sallow-faced man who was eating soup on a piano stool, and at once there was a chorus of assent: "Yes, charge it to J. Ham Arnold! O, yes, let Hammy pay it!"

Arnold stood behind the group, by Sedaini's grimy portières, unseen, apparently, but as the short, fat poet stood kicking the onions from his shoes and repeating joyously: "O, yes; let J. Ham pay for it—put it on *his* bill!" he sighed patiently and gripped tighter the hand of his bride-to-be.

The proprietor dismally dissented. "Meest' Arnold, on what he ow-a da me I could retire. He got-a da mon, he mak-a da pay—but when he hav-a da mon?"

Mr. Arnold, after his contemplation, reached forth a hand that closed on the scruff of the poet's neck. Down he plumped him on the chair, on the green and yellow wreck of the salad. The table was in an uproar; the victim squirmed; Henri called to the Virgin, to the proprietor, to the cook. Even Unc' Pop stuck his head fearsomely through the door from the Family Liquor Store. "Py Colly, some day dis monkey-tootle pizness will burn the block!" so the grocer glowered to the expressman at his bar.

And in this scratching about, this gabble, wide-eyed, shrinking, horrified, stood the bride-to-be from the country-up-in-back. Never had she seen such table

manners; in the lumber camps, at the great cook-houses, the woodsmen gobbled; but never was a poet compelled to sit on a salad. She caught her lover's sleeve, she dropped into the chair he drew for her, to find herself gazing, embarrassed, into the surprised eyes of a pale girl beside her. Arnold placed her hand in that of the stranger, saying: "Mistress Mary—here's the sweetest girl ever!"

Mary Mellody's fingers clasped Sylvia's warmly. Mary had a shortened leg, giving her a limp. She worked all day long at Solinsky's counters; she lived in Miss Granberry's hall bedroom and had not in the world a soul who cared whether she lived or died, unless here, at Sedaini's, a responsive heart was beating. But from her cheeriness she gave a great pity to the country girl.

"Don't you mind! Ain't they all idiots, though?" she went on, with a sprightly comment, her cheeks flushed now from the claret. "Ham, you fool, ain't you any manners?"

"Sweet Mellody," said he, "it's my last night of barbarism. To-morrow—*married!*"

Sylvia's embarrassment grew, and also her new friend's indignation at this evidently banal joke. The rest were intent on Henri, who was on his knees in the sawdust with his salad. The young man at the piano ate his soup placidly; he was Wally Walters, the "rag artist," composer of *Dolly Dunn,* and *The Eagles' March,* who played the piano of nights at the Maplewood Café. Vacant of mind, now, his fingers idled over the yellow keys in the *Spring Song,* indifferent to a dispute between Louis Ferreri, good-looking, mud-

dle-headed, a politician of the Latin Quarter, and a dark-faced girl who flung out Yiddish phrases in her scornful voice. Miss Murasky delighted to bait the helpless Louis with these.

Arnold had spread a paper before Mary. It was his marriage license.

"John Hamilton Arnold, aged twenty-nine, native of Arizona, resident of San Francisco; and Sylvia Spring, aged eighteen, native of California, resident of Trinity County."

Sammy Jarbo, the laundry route poet, had leaned familiarly over Miss Mellody's shoulder. He at once started a commotion, which Arnold quelled by seizing his leg and pulling him to a chair: "Here, keep quiet! I only meant this for you and Mary."

But the poet writhed around in such a pother that the marriage license fell to the floor, while Arnold subdued him. Sylvia could only nod to Mary, with a blink of tears over her soup, and whisper: *"To-morrow!"*

"Let me up!" stuttered the poet. "I have an idea. Married? Romance is the stuff—I've got a lyric here—some love dope somewhere!"

And he fell to outpouring old letters, receipts and scraps from his pockets, all written over indecipherably, drooling off in unintelligible mutters, as he turned his pencil-soiled memoranda upside down and around; for never, when the poet had an inspiration, or felt moved to song, could he make head or tail of what he had written about. So he glowered away, his divine seizure dying until he fell into a melancholy, squeezing Mary's hand under the table and sighing: "If I could

only get 'em when I feel 'em!" And when Mary squeezed back, the short fat poet murmured, lugubrious to this comforting, "Sweet Mellody, there's nobody just like you!"

On Miss Mellody's other side Sylvia sank gratefully into a corner, glad that the others paid her small attention. Presently her eyes widened when the Jew girl, concluding her argument with Ferreri in a shrewish retort, turned to *her* lover, rumpling his hair with some sharp comment. Arnold smiled tolerantly; the young men were accustomed to Bernice Murasky's tantrums—with the exception of Arnold she despised them all. And to him—because he knew arias from *Lucia* and *La Giaconda,* and the fervid Italian operas which she, a sullen girl in the department of Solinsky's where plumes were sold to rich women, was inordinately greedy to hear—she gave a grudging respect.

The Russian Jewess, California born, an apostate to her faith, was stung with a passion for music, the drama, riches, grand dinners, all that she dreamed was fine in life; she wanted friends who knew of these things, who had seen the great *virtuosi;* and she had none, except John Arnold, and he, an idler, a street politician, indifferent to all that she was gluttonous to revel in, seemed content with the riffraff of the cigar-stands, the crony of prize-fight promoters, race-track tipsters, like Ferreri and her brother, Mannie, a clerk in a pool-room. And he knew all of *La Bohème,* and had once actually spoken to Melba!

But he preferred to nod familiarly to the stock players of O'Farrell Street. The Jewess almost hated Arnold for his nonchalant indifference to all that was

denied her; the most he would do was to raise his careless baritone in *The Postillion,* or *The King of the Winds,* with Wally Walters pounding Sedaini's bad piano. Yes, she hated him, as she did any one who had what she lacked. She despised Louis Ferreri, but at times she debated whether she would not marry him and his seven diamonds—anybody who could take her to the Tivoli grand opera, night after night, and to supper afterward. She would have sold her virtue for a box during the Grau season; her soul for a voice like Tetrazzini's.

"Get me some tickets for the Tivoli to-night," she pestered Arnold, her brilliant eyes on him. "Why don't you keep in with that bunch?"

"I've noticed that the more I'm in, the more I'm out, one way or another," answered the young man. "I can get you seats at the Alcazar, Bernice."

She shrugged her shoulders in scorn, and turned to another girl who was chattering with the pianist as he idled through the *Spring Song.*

"Nel, you've got to take me to the Tivoli—you've got to!" the Jewess burst out. "It's *Manon,* and I'm going!"

Nella Free snapped her jeweled watch; it had stopped and she glanced at Sedaini's dusty-faced clock. "All right, Kid, I'll go anywhere; I'm so tired of sticking around the flat. I just get *wild!*"

The Jew girl's greedy eyes shifted from Nella's marten collarette and the luster of her plumes, to the butterfly of pearls at her throat. She checked a sigh: "Tetrazzini! O, it's just a glory—that voice—like a bird rippling up in the sunshine!"

"Just grand," murmured Nella; but she would rather hear Hammy Arnold's singing of *Dolly Dunn*, as the vacant-faced composer rapped it out on the piano:

"O, Dolly, Dolly Dunn—
When the battle's fought and won,
I'll think of you and your heart so true—"

"Will H. be there?" pursued the Jewess. "Get box-seats and I'll wear my black net. I've got the Battenburg done. O, Kid, get box-seats!"

"Sure. H. never cares what we get. He took me to that other opera and he had on his dress suit; but his legs are so short and the tails were so long that I got fidgety. I said, 'Never wear that rig again!'"

"Was it Wednesday night—*Aïda?*"

"I don't know. It was that opera where the clown comes on, one leg red and the other yellow, and carries off his daughter, thinking it's the fat tenor. It was just grand, and if H. had had his Tuxedo—he looks just grand in his Tuxedo—"

The Jewess sprang alertly to her feet. "Come on—some of you boys pay for this feed!" She pushed Ferreri's head sharply as she passed him. "Drink up! Honest, Louis, you're a dead one! Soak in the Zinfandel and lie like a log—*Chickar!*"

Ferreri laughed, the easy defense of the slow-witted. He said that he never minded the "Yit" and her abusive Yiddish epithets which no one understood.

The other girl turned with a word to Arnold, pausing by his chair.

He had been idly wondering what his bride-to-be

and Mary Mellody found to talk about so industriously; then it came out: "I was going to have it made full *here*, but she said if I was going to ' ....A slate gray, and run the ruching....Bu . .ious, the way they hung, and that *tight*...." The young man turned with a smile. Nella Free had laid a small hand gleaming with pearls, for which she had a fancy, on his own.

"Hammy," she murmured, "are you mixed with the grand jury? I heard something to-day."

"Yes?" he asked lazily; and then with kind interest: "Nel, I wouldn't get the habit of repeating anything Harry or the police commissioners say. You know how you stand."

"But I heard your name—I was interested. Harry and that other commissioner, the little Dutch one, said you'd have to testify to something—you were the only man who could fix things right. You're cutting in deep with the push, aren't you?"

He studied her a shrewd instant: the red-brown hair, wondrously distinctive; the good-humored face, rouged over her freckles; her heavy-lidded eyes, dark blue. Always the careless, Gipsy-idle, with a dozen little womanly tricks at odds with her restless sophistication. She was obsessed by her clothes, clean, rich, over-effective. She was self-conscious from this dressing, throwing back her furs with a deprecating shrug that set the pearl butterfly at her throat agleam, and gave a pretty, bird-like twist to her white neck. Nella did not belong in Sedaini's tawdry café, but she came over the hill, because the crowd "made her laugh," and because Ham Arnold treated her differently from any

man she ever knew. Besides, here her prettiness suffered no comparison, nor were her gowns eclipsed.

"Nel," Arnold smiled with friendly abstraction, "I'm out of politics. I've cut out the queer work. I'm going to be married."

He saw her surprised eyes flit to the girl from the country at the other end of the table. "That little girl in blue?" Nella murmured. "Look here, you wouldn't let Eddie Ledyard and me be *friends*, but you—you go marry a good girl! Ain't I just as good as you, Hammy?"

"Well, you know Eddie's mother—his family—" He looked into her eyes, the mute judgment, the immemorial wrongs of women, faced him. "She loves me, Nel—you see it's different."

Nella Free stared at him with a complex intent that he had never seen in her restless, variable eyes. "Maybe *he* loved me, too," she murmured; "maybe I had a soul, too. But it's different," she added mechanically, and followed the Jew girl to the door. He saw her a moment in the gloom of the hall leading to the lodgings above, watching his sweetheart in a curious abstraction; then she slipped into the rainy night, leaving him an evanescent suggestion of an oriental perfume, exhaled, it seemed, from the bird-like twists of her small, white neck.

The young man rose and went to his bride-to-be who was still talking interestedly with Mary Mellody; they had discovered a surprising friendship. Louis Ferreri and Walters were leaving.

"Aren't you going to the fight?" asked the slot-machine agent. "Kid Brannan'll never get this little

Chicago guy in a twenty-round go, and if Slavin can land his left, it's dreamland for the Native Son."

"I'm not going," responded Arnold. "Sorry, Louis, but—"

The slot-machine man stared. That Arnold should miss the thirty-thousand-dollar championship battle was incredible. Then his eyes wandered to the girl at the other end of the table.

"Girl," he murmured, *"girl!"*

"Yes," retorted Arnold, "I'm going to be married —you fellows may as well know it now!"

His friend's eyes opened, his jaw dropped. "Married?" he laughed. Ham always was "joshing" one way or another. This pretty girl was the latest, eh? The muddle-headed Italian-American departed, winking at the impassive "rag" composer—who was the new "dame" that Arnold had picked up?

The sentimentally vacant "Wally" didn't care; he still hummed the *Spring Song*, which wrought itself into vague variations of his own improvising.

When Arnold went back to the table he found his sweetheart sitting up very straight, her cheeks flushed, her eyes bright, indignantly regarding Mr. Jarbo.

"But I don't drink! I never, never tasted it!" cried she.

"Well, don't get mad," retorted the poet. "I don't either. I got a weak heart, so nixy on the salicylic for me. But if I could, I'd turn out some great stuff. Yes, sir; look at the kind of stuff they turned out as long as we had two-bottle and four-bottle men in the business! Look at Shakespeare and Byron and Burns and Poe! They'd get a souse and go home, light a candle

in the garret and turn out stuff that's now immortal! Yes," continued the poet belligerently, *"immortal;* and here I've got the cardiac thumps and have to stick to ginger ale."

"O!" gasped the little mountain bride.

"Yes, sir—stay away from the booze. Here you come down from the country peaceful and pure and lofty and refined; but you're no genius."

Sylvia blinked her dismay. She put out a hand to her lover. Drink?

The city had been a vast surging of lights through gray rain, shouts, hurryings, the changing of money, the smell of wine and garlic—a brawling, hungry life that cackled and jeered, and here a red-headed poet was scolding her about drink! She shivered and Arnold put his arm about her.

"Come on," said he; "every one's rather crazy, but Sammy's the worst."

The young man waved his hand as the pock-faced proprietor looked expectantly up; Sedaini growled, and scratched on his tabs. He looked at Mr. John Hamilton Arnold's account and sighed again; it was, indeed, overlong.

Mary Mellody and the poet were now the only occupants of the café. From the kitchen Henri and the cook bawled in Gallo-Roman and clattered the dishes. Mary looked back at Sammy, now in process of another divine seizure, diving about in his pockets for a clean piece of paper. "Ain't you coming up?" she called softly, and then, seeing the well-known symptoms, she stole away.

The poet glared into the array of dirty dishes around

him ne blew tobacco smoke about; his eye fell on a paper on the floor. It was the marriage license of Sylvia Spring and John Arnold, and on it were cat tracks of sawdust and red wine. But the poet did not mind this; he fell to scribbling on the paper, shoving away dishes, knocking over claret bottles, rumpling his red hair; his round face fearsomely contorted as he wrote and erased and counted measures.

And, as always, he presently fell into a melancholy, rubbing his chin and sighing: "O, what'll rhyme with sweetheart? And I wonder if love-stuff *is* the big stuff? Sometimes it seems like I'd never get nothing done!"

Still he was a good, even an energetic poet—as decent a poet as one can be on nine dollars a week. On frosty mornings, before sunrise, when all the town was still, one could hear his laundry wagon rattling cheerfully over the cobbles as much as six blocks away.

CHAPTER II

Arnold led his bride-to-be carefully down the wet hill to Chinatown. The rain had ceased and the town lights rollicked, clean-washed in the wind. The country girl was silent for a time and then she said: "Gracious, John, you live in a queer place—that Granberry's, up over a tumble-down old saloon!"

"Well, you see the town has rather stranded Granny. If I left, it might be hard to rent the front rooms, and Granny's been mighty good to me—to every one," he added hastily; "and I like them all—Unc' Pop, and Sedaini, with his grouch—all of them. They're all sort of stranded on the hill, and my being there brings a little business from down-town."

She debated, for a time, this lame and profuse defense. "And they're so queer! But every one seems to be your friend."

"That's what's the matter with me," he answered drolly, with a smile beyond her simplicity. "Sometimes I wonder how you'll like it here, Sylvia. The fierce old town, the blazing city—this San Francisco. Here—*everything* goes!"

"It's different from the country-up-in-back," she said slowly. "But I'll be happy anywhere that you are—just anywhere that *you* are!"

Arnold checked some confused protest within him at this faith. He seemed humbled when he spoke

again. "Sweetheart, some day we'll own a hill, a big sunny hill, and on the top we'll live—you and I. Sylvia, that's been a dream of mine all my life long—to stand in the sunshine on my own hill. I'm tired of things here; they're stale. I've run with a hard-bit crowd."

"Every one seems so familiar with you. They call you Hammy, when your name's John. I didn't like it —*Hammy!* It doesn't seem fine as you!"

"Everything goes with me," he smiled. "I suppose it's the way I've let things drift. Sylvia, some time I'll take a clean brace—we'll have that little house on a hilltop—seems like I've always dreamed of that."

"And roses," she added, "all about the door."

"You grand little girl!" he whispered. "I wish I'd known you—always."

And as they went on through Chinatown, he added restlessly: "Would you like to walk down-town? The fight—the bulletins—well, the rain is over, and we might as well."

He took her through Dupont and Clay Streets to Portsmouth Square, past the squawking orchestra on the balcony celebrating the wedding of the fish merchant, with the black huddled group of beggars and curious ones held back by the policeman at the door; past dark basement holes, where, by the light of wicks burning in dishes of fish oil, goldsmiths wrought intricate oriental jewelry; past gambling dens and tong clubs where slant-eyed sentinels peered through the wickers of strong doors inscribed with vast, grotesque characters in gilt and black paper; past brothels where silk-trousered slave girls with gaudy head-dresses and lips henna-stained, their faces pallid yellow, twisted

jeweled fingers in the bars of their tiny windows and gibbered at passers-by; through narrow, tortuous alleys amid thousands of shuffling Chinese shoes and the cackling monotone of Chinese voices. At every doorway, in a pot of sand burned the joss-sticks; on the corners were the alabalone and sugar-cane merchants and sellers of betel-nut, and the cobblers of spectacles and opium pipes; in the alleys the shrimp and fish venders. They went through the markets where glazed pigs and flattened Cantonese ducks and strange, oriental delicacies were hung, all adding to the indescribable street smell—opium, fish, vegetables, tobacco and —Chinamen—which is unlike anything under the sun.

The little mountain girl had never seen a Chinese habitation. They paused before a drug-store called the "Temple of Heavenly Harmonies," where, in the street, upon the wet cobbles, a priest was having a devil-burning. He threw on the fire handfuls of rice paper covered with gilt characters, and muttered incantations, while the crowd shuffled in thick, soft-soled shoes about him; then he seized the whole boxful of gilt prayers brought to him by a small important Chinese boy, who had red silk braided into his embryo cue and a gay tunic of satin worked in raised flower figures, and hurled the mass at the devil fire, scattering the burning prayers in a swirl across the muddy street.

Sylvia shrank away from the devil-burning; it was ghastly, unhuman, even though Arnold laughed and told her it was a harmless matter of commerce paid for by some merchant, and that the Chinese themselves had small respect for their Josses, except to use them

in fleecing the tourists who visited the temples. But the thousands of yellow weazened faces with their brute complacence, alien, inexplicable, gave the country girl a morbid terror; she begged her lover to go on, and never again take her through this place with its stealthy shuffle of feet, its silken glister of vice, its choking, unearthly fumes from the gratings underfoot, its acrid laughter, its bald lights of red and yellow under the sodden drip of the night. They slipped through the dark little square by the Stevenson monument to Kearny Street, and went on until she recovered her composure, smelling at times of her gloves and sleeves to see if the reek of Chinatown was not still on her.

Arnold laughingly comforted her; it gave him an indescribable pleasure to have her cling to him, to seek him and be sheltered. He took her on through the wet radiance, and when they came to Market, where the main streets of the town converged, she again stopped and shrank against his arm, for it seemed appalling, this rush of people, this surge of life under the blaze of lights and the pall of the sky. So many people hurrying here, there; so many purposes, so many lives, unknown, dark, troublous—who knew what the city covered?

And while the mountain girl clung to the man, breathless, suddenly there burst a terrible cry from thousands of voices, a shout as of savages, rolling and reverberating, dying away and then roaring out, a diapason, rough, rhythmic, becoming a mighty chant drowning all the street noises.

"What is it—O, what is it?" she cried; and then

saw, leaping to her lover's face, a fierceness she had never seen; he was staring past her over the heads of a pack of people at a square patch of brilliant light on the side of a building, a white square undulating in the breeze, which grew from the base of a vast, conicular ray shot through with millions of raindrops. Sylvia could not tell where the mysterious light began, but now a tremor ran through the ray, a streak of black letters leaped upon the undulating curtain; and then, from the packed triangle, from the blockaded cars black with people on platforms, buffers, roofs, from the hundreds of yellow-lighted windows in the cañon-like street—from all the forty thousand humans in this smother, came the cry again, breaking from the savage throat of the city, overwhelming all else, a tornado beating on the girl in the street. Appalled, she turned to her lover who was gesticulating to a young man in the howl of the crowd. Then he seized her arm.

"Come; Benny'll get us a window. Kid, I stand to win five hundred if the fight doesn't go the limit. Come —here—this way!"

Sylvia was hurried [illegible] the street, the two young men fighting the mob for a way; she was beaten and harassed, men jammed into her, yelling in her ears; a young woman hysterically laughing, was pommeling a mulatto in the back just before her and crying: "O, come, you Kid—slip over th' right. It means clo'es fo' me—O, winter clo'es fo' me!"

Arnold and the stranger smashed through the hysteria of the mob and to the entrance of a building where Sylvia was flung against an old man with a patriarchal beard, who, alone, by the elevator shaft,

was capering fantastically and quavering, a mere squeak of senile obsession: "Kill 'im, Kid! get 'im on the point! Kill 'im!"

The two young men hurried Sylvia to the mezzanine floor of the building and to a dark office. The tumult of street voices lessened so that they heard the whip of the wind about the plaster gargoyle above the window the host was opening. And as they crept through the space the voices rose again, not so loud, but with a snarl of anger, as a beast stung in the face with a child's goad.

"Cover Branny!" yelled the reporter. "Keep off and ride the storm!"

Amid the howl of fury from the crowd at the plight of its idol, Sylvia saw the black letters dance on the glaring screen.

Round 18

SLAVIN STRONGER. CARRIES THE FIGHT AND STINGS BRANNAN LEFT TO FACE, RIGHT TO RIBS. BRANNAN CLOSES CHICAGO BOY'S EYE WITH STRAIGHT RIGHT. SLAVIN LANDS LEFT SWING, STAGGERING NATIVE SON.

The wavering lines of letters were blotted out. The bellow of the street people lessened, died away to a mumble of discomfiture, of shame and outrage; the packed throng relaxed, only breaking here and there into growls and retorts and denials, shuffling from one foot to another, pushing out for relief during the minute's intermission of the fight. The young men in the window made a place for Sylvia in the wide space under the protecting gargoyle, and sat by her, their

feet hanging free. Arnold passed a cigarette to the other.

"This is Benny Hendricks of the *Call*," said he; "he does police."

"My brother's a dentist," explained Benny, "so I had the *entrée* to this office. Now that's a sight, ain't it? Look down Third Street—they haven't been able to run a car since the eighth round!"

From the window, Sylvia could look either way. On both the newspaper buildings the great splotches of light wavered, and the falling rain spun itself into golden motes through the glare.

Below, from the store fronts on one side to those on the other, the people occupied every inch of pavement, gutter, street and car tracks. The clamor of the car gongs, menacing, strident, but unavailing, rose in the intermission; the rain-wet helmets of the police glistened as they tried to fight the tracks clear. In the mob, wedged helpless, fuming and gesticulating, a captain with his raincoat back showing the gold braid of his collar, sat his horse, cursing the blockade and his scattered detail. In the comparative silence of the minute rest, the crowd put up thousands of umbrellas against the dreary night. At once the street looked like a bed of black mushrooms, bobbing slowly under the arc-lights, glistening, twisting, scattering a little here and there as if the wind had bent them, then re-forming, always with that eerie bobbing of round bodies shining under the arcs and the yellow outpouring from the numberless windows of the buildings.

The country girl shrank from the sight; at last she had come to realize that somewhere two naked boys

were fighting on a white canvas field, surrounded by ten thousand more of these mad people of the city; the rich, the great, the strong, bankers, brokers, merchant princes, writers, illustrators, politicians and legislators, the mayor, and the subtle, real rulers—the doers of things in the city, the miracle workers in this diamond-point lust of life they called a city.

It was monstrous with evil. Under the night, under the falling rain, she looked down on the thousands, the umbrellas, bobbing and glistering like foul blossoms, rank, bulbous—a black flower of sin, and watching it she suddenly cried out in terror; for the groveling thing writhed and dissolved before her eyes, and instead of the dull bloom, she was looking into thousands of up-turned faces, pallid, tense, obsessed, in the slant of the rain. She clutched her lover's wet sleeve, but he was eagerly straining his eyes past her at the screen. On it now, in the wavering letters, was another bulletin:

ROUND 19

KID BRANNAN RUSHES FROM CORNER AT GONG. SLAVIN MEETS HIM WITH TWO RIGHTS TO KIDNEYS AND MISSES LEFT. BRANNY JOLTS HIM WITH LEFT TO EAR. SLAVIN DUCKS INTO CLENCH, AND NATIVE SON CUTS HIM CRUEL IN BREAKAWAY. BOTH BOYS BLEEDING BADLY. BRANNAN OPENS WOUND ABOVE SLAVIN'S EYE WITH RIGHT HOOK. BRANNAN SENDS HIM TO ROPES WITH LEFT TO JAW AND RIGHT TO WIND. BRANNAN UPPERCUTS TO MOUTH..LEFT TO.. SLAVIN DOWN..HE RISES AT COUNT OF NINE..RIGHT TO..

The thousands under the glare of the lights became silent. Even the clang of the street-cars stopped; the helmets of the police were motionless, as though the wearers had been statues. The mounted captain, with one arm extended over the vast throng, was a man of stone.

In the windows, on the car tops, on the tawdry fountain of the triangle, where boys festooned its outlines, not a sound came. The girl in the window heard Arnold, by her side, swallow nervously with a little cluck in his throat.

And then pandemonium broke loose, the street belched a human maelstrom—she turned her eyes away.

On the white screens of the two morning papers was this:

KNOCKOUT..NATIVE SON WINS!!!

Benny Hendricks and Arnold were on their feet with a shout; they were grasping hands. Without came the bellow of the mad city; they heeded nothing—they, too, were of it, drunk with it.

"Thirty thousand dollars and the championship on one punch!" cried the reporter excitedly. "Branny's the boy—Branny's the boy—a knockout—Lord, Lord!"

A strange fever was in Arnold's eyes, a lashing unrest and doubt; his look was on the mute girl, but he seemed not to see her, to have forgotten her.

She shrank still farther from the window, from the bellowing town; had the madness, whatever it was,

seized her lover, also? What was he, to whom had she given herself?

Fearfully she clasped her hand over her heart on the little fortune, the ten thousand dollars under the blue jacket that had looked so brave in the country-up-in-back. He had liked the little blue gown. He had called her his "picture girl," and now— Well, she couldn't tell—and then she struggled to keep back her tears, her doubts, for her lover had come to hold her close, soothing her so that the awful street, the place of savages, was shut from her brain. It had no light, no sweetness; it crippled the good in men, seared their souls.

The other man had gone, and Arnold was saying: "Sylvia, you weren't scared, were you? I thought you'd like to see a fight night. The lad who won is a friend of mine—a Native Son of the Golden West—so the town's crazy! Come, we'll go eat at Zink's." He suddenly remembered that *Bluebell* had "broke" him to-day, but no matter. Borrowing was the easiest thing for Hammy Arnold; anywhere down the line he was a good fellow drifting easily on the tide of the after-midnight. And to-morrow he could cash a winning ticket on the new champion.

So they went on through the dissolving welter of humans, and suddenly from a motor-car a young fellow uprose with a shout at Arnold. The huge machine ground through the crowd, and Sylvia saw half a dozen hands reached joyously to her lover's. He was slapped across the shoulders and buffeted about the curb amid the congratulations of the motor-car party. She could understand nothing of the matter except that

Fearfully she clasped her hand over her heart. *Page 32.*

Arnold was vainly protesting; and then he turned laughingly to her, and she found herself lifted lightly upon the leather cushions of the tonneau, and the car shot forward along the shining pavements. Past clanging street-cars, carriages and motors, between dazzling lines of light lining the thoroughfare and the creeping tide of people on either side, the great car leaped, with Sylvia holding her lover's hand in the comforting secrecy of the cushions. On her other side was a stranger leaning forward to talk eagerly with a man in the middle seat where sat, also, wedged in between two men, an astonishingly pretty woman whose eyes were brighter and cheeks more glowing than any Sylvia had ever seen. The country girl was introduced to none of these laughing, intent strangers; but she was with John Arnold and that was enough. She clasped the little fortune in her jacket's bosom, and whispered to herself: "I said I'd trust him always and everywhere, and I will—will—*will!*"

In the seat before her was a tall, brown-faced young man in a light overcoat and white hat, who kept turning to talk to the small important one that crowded her so closely to Arnold's side. Always he reiterated in the jerky discussions, to the garrulous negations of the other:

"I'll give forty thousand for the match, Broughton—winner take all, or sixty-five and thirty-five on a sixty per cent. split—and one hundred and thirty-three ring-side, or at three o'clock—anyway they like. Forty thousand for the fight."

And the short man, steadying himself in the plunging car, kept crying out: "What's that?—what's *that?*

Tex, I don't think he'll fight a nigger—what's that?—I said *nigger!* What?—" and above the laughter and the joyous voices in the car and the street tumult, the sporting editor, who was somewhat deaf, kept repeating: "What—*what?* I said nigger?—O, yes—it'd draw—if he'd fight the nigger!"

The great machine stopped with surprising suddenness and some one swung the door. Arnold and Sylvia and three of the men were on the sidewalk before the entrance of a café—the front of a building set everywhere in colored glass, wondrously intricate figures aglow from the lights within. The mountain girl had never seen anything so beautiful.

Though the motor-car dashed off, the three men continued to wrangle, Arnold putting in a word here and there; and then he said: "Billy, let me have twenty," and one of the group, without discontinuing his argument, or even looking at the money, made the loan.

Arnold stood balancing the coin, yellow in the light, on his thumb-nail; then glancing about at the girl on his arm, he laughed: "Kid, let's go eat." Sylvia nodded, still in a daze.

As they were leaving, the bronzed young man said coolly: "Well, fifty thousand then—there's the biggest purse ever hung up—fifty thousand at Goldfield on Labor Day."

The rotund sporting editor was scribbling on a telegram form; the third man nodded: "Yes, we'll fight the coon on a toothpick for that!"

And suddenly they all separated, the editor rushing down Market Street, the man from Goldfield entering

the motor-car, which had made a pirouette to the curb, the woman leaning to him with a smile; and the prize-fight manager walking past Arnold and Sylvia into the café.

Arnold spoke quietly from the vestibule: "Billy, does it go?"

The stranger nodded and passed in. Sylvia, clinging to her lover's arm, could look through the glass doors at an amazing place. Never had she seen so many lights, so many tables, flowers in exquisite vases, so many beautiful women all in a fairyland of color, of grace and of music. She could see no end to the room, the palms beyond arching over mystic, translucent vistas, an illimitable splendor. Why was it all?—for what were these marvels gathered, this cave of the Genii stretching under the gray earth?

Without, the rain was falling. The girl shook her lover's arm. His eyes were vague and wide.

"Jack," she whispered, "isn't it wonderful—all wonderful?"

"Yes—yes," he answered absently; "fifty thousand for the fight in the desert—great God, what men, what *plungers!* Fifty thousand from a little mining camp! That was Tex McLane, and he's getting a hundred thousand dollars a month out of a little shanty not so big as this cigar stand up in Nevada—a gambling-room."

"A gambler—and I rode with him!"

He did not see her horror; he was dreaming. He could see it all, the great arena under the desert sun, the sweating bodies fighting on the platform. All the west would be there, from camp and trail, from the

secret places and the arc-lighted cities, gathered, mute, tense—a huge place of men open to the sky.

And suddenly she seemed to see it, to awaken, to know him, to encompass all the flare of this life into which he had brought her. In the city the beast lurked, the serpent glided, the savage pursued; it was a primal world glutting its greed and passions as did the cave men in fen and jungle; only over its brutishness was the glamour of mirrored lights, gilded panels, black-garbed servitors, pleading violins, silks, meats, the odor of flowers and perfumes, the soft skin of women, with wine fragrances on their lips, laughing under the night—the town's hard wantonness, its reckless lubricity—no, there was nothing good here; she must have been mistaken, even in the man she loved.

She turned to go to the street, her hand relaxing from Arnold's arm.

"Come, we'll have supper," he said, starting from his abstraction. But she drew away as he opened the great door of bronze and glass where the uniformed attendant beyond had stared curiously at them.

"No, no—" she faltered, and then looked at him, her gray eyes big with resolution—"no, I can't go there—I must go somewhere, but not there!"

Arnold bent anxiously to her; the slang and uncaring ease of the street had left him. "Sylvia, what's the matter? Are you sick—you didn't teli me—"

She caught at the pretext: "Yes, let's go—I—"

The young man's arm went about her; he was murmuring his solicitude, asking what he might do—couldn't he get something at a drug-store—wouldn't she be better if she ate a bit?

"I shouldn't have brought you down-town!" he exclaimed. "I never thought—among these people—this—" He stared in self-reproach at her. "You know, Kid, I'm pretty callous; I have no business with a girl like you. Let's go where you can sit down."

Again he bent to her with his intent care, and she smiled now to relieve his trouble; yes, that was his old look, his gentle way of doing things, of caring for her as one would a child—no, she couldn't doubt him. The city, the whole round world, might spin drunken with evil, and crash down in shame, but not he—he was her knight, without fear or reproach, the fellow of marvelous adventures; she had his picture so, a lithe soldier of the cavalry, bearing the silken guidon of his troop.

Suddenly she laughed, brushing her hot tears away. "O, come," she cried, "let's go home—home, and just be glad—glad—glad—*always!*"

And in her eyes he saw a light burn, something more than he had ever come upon, and was strangely mute when they reached his lodgings above the Family Liquor Store.

"I wish Miss Granberry was up," he said. "I ought to have explained about you. You'll have my rooms to-night—the best in the house. Now, you go right to bed. To-morrow we'll be married."

They were in the warm-scented room and he was searching for a match in the dark when the girl put her arms about his neck.

"John," she whispered, "are you always going to love me?"

"Always."

They were silent for a time; then he muttered:

"Sylvia, you'll overlook a lot, won't you? If I was in trouble—lots of trouble—and men blackened my name and proved me a liar and tried to prove me a thief—a thief, would you love me—always, always?"

"Always," she answered; and lighting the gas, as she clung to him, he saw, in the mirror, her white arms about his neck, and her clear, honest eyes on him in the shade of the little blue hat from Trinity.

"O, Kid!" he broke out suddenly, "you're fine and true, and look what the town's made of me! You don't know—you don't know!"

He carried her to a chair and kneeling, began unlacing her wet shoe.

"Kid, I'm not decent—I'm a crook! There's not a good woman in San Francisco would have me at her home."

"I don't believe it," she said slowly.

He was feeling the dampness of her stockinged foot.

"Do you know, when I wrote you to come to the city, Sylvia, I didn't suppose you'd do it. I didn't think you'd trust me. It bewildered me when I got the telegram that you had sailed."

"Why, that's funny—it was just as *natural!* Don't you know why I did it?"

"No. You can't imagine how I've felt to-day. I've been humbled and gone about in a daze. I never had such a feeling before."

"I guess it's because you love me." She slipped into his hand the little silk needle-case from her bosom. He held it for a moment and then saw the edges of the bills projecting; opening the flap, a bank-note for one

thousand dollars lay before him. "It's yours—and mine," she added.

"Sylvia, you sold the land!"

"Part of it." She laughed with exquisite pleasure and sat back luxuriantly. "My! We're rich! It's ten thousand dollars. The lumber company paid it to me just before I sailed, and I wouldn't take a draft. I wanted it in money—real money—for you to look at. I wasn't afraid!" She laughed again at his wonderment. "Gracious, what do I know about money? I want you to have it, John, and make everything nice for us."

"Suppose we live in Berkeley or Piedmont or somewhere on the hills and have a place with roses just as you said? Sylvia, you'll never like the town · it's fast and fierce and grinds the soul out of us, and no one cares—not a bit. I'd like to keep you just as you are, sweetheart, always! Aren't your stockings very wet?" he added anxiously.

She was untangling the veil from her hat; with her head turned, she gave a little cry of alarm. "There's some one in the bed!"

He looked through the double doorway to the rear apartment; the dim light showed the tumbled coverlets.

"It's the Polacchi kids," said he ruefully. "Granny's house must be filled to-night."

She went with him to stare down at the black tousled heads of two children. "Why, Jack," she cried, "in your room!"

"That's all right. You see a lot of people sort of hang out with me here; some lad gets sick or drunk, and I come home and find him roosting with me until

he gets over it. You see, I never can turn away a lad who's been square with me. And these children—well, we all kind of look after 'em, Nel Free and Granny and Ferreri and I. Their dad was drowned off North Point last June. He was a fisherman. The boy, Angelo, sells flowers down on Kearny; and you ought to hear him with a violin! Ferreri and I are going to send him to Paris, when he gets bigger, to study."

"But in your bed—and you never knew it," she laughed, watching the rosy cheek of Angelo Polacchi. "You're funny people here!"

"Granny understands. The lodgings are filled to-night. I'd hang around down-town most of the night, anyway. But you—Sylvia, you'll have to sleep on the couch. It's big and warm, and I've extra covers."

She watched him moving softly about the room, removing the serape from the couch, finding sheets and blankets, making her bed, through it all a whispered comment of humor. She placed the violets he had given her in a bowl of Japanese lacquer on the table. Under the gas she unhooked the lace of her collar and faced him with a sober little laugh.

"Good night, Sylvia." Then he hesitated in some confusion and from his pocket took the case of money.

"You'd better keep this—you—I—"

"Why, it's yours. You'll have to care for it now. We can put it in a bank to-morrow."

"Yes," he answered absently, his eyes on the white, firm flesh of her shoulder through the opened waist, where a glow was mounting rosily to melt into the pink of her cheek, as she worked at a stubborn pin. Then he held out his hand and did not offer to kiss her,

though the sweetness of her breath, inimitably different from that of town women, was on him as she smiled: "Good night."

She closed the door behind him, discovering, when he had gone down the steps past the Family Liquor Store, that the rusty lock was useless.

The young man went up the hill and over Powell Street, where all the midnight radiance of the city, four hundred feet below him, spread, like a field of fireflies caught in a net, east and south and west to the bay and to the mountains. Where Powell intersected Market, the wet asphalt was a reflector, in and out of which the cable-cars crawled, like busy insects about a lamp. Arnold stopped on the Nob Hill slope and looked down in the pit studded with cold brilliance. After a while he raised his hand and shook it over the city. "Damn you," he cried, "you'll never make of her what you have of *us!*"

He turned into the Maplewood Saloon on Grant Avenue half an hour later. It was a place of costly woods and massive mirrors, yet treated with mission simplicity, and of flawless harmony of color and design, lighted by lights in recesses, save for one bronze nude figure on the back bar holding forth a grape cluster that showed the wondrous tints of the flaming Tokay in the ripening. It was known, though not admitted, that Police Commissioner Stillman was interested in the Maplewood, and that he had paid twenty thousand dollars to a decorator brought from Milan to think over the mural scheme of his saloon.

Arnold met Louis Ferreri at the bar, idly listening to a discourse from a sharp-faced youth who wore a

leather automobile cap and a sweater of amazingly broad pink, green and yellow stripes. The high throat of this sweater was gathered by a ribbon of baby blue and in the knot was an immense yellow diamond. Mannie Murasky had purchased this at the Portland Loan Office the day after the Burns Handicap two years ago. It was a real and startling stone. It gathered up all the iridescence of his sweater and smashed it at you so menacingly that Mannie was known as the "Headlight Kid." Young Murasky was of many talents; a pool-room clerk at times, an "outside man" for an Emeryville book-maker, a cigar-store clerk, a second for amateur prize-fighters, for ever noisily vociferating about the clubs the claims of some coming light-weight he had discovered at the Union Iron Works, or Butchertown or North Beach. Mannie would tout his "comer" indefatigably, get some promoter to give him a try-out at the fortnightly bouts, and then, when his wonder was beaten to the mat, the Headlight Kid would disappear from Market Street to turn up later with another slim-shanked aspirant of the ring-side.

To-night Mannie had talked himself out over the fight. The slot-machine man was weary with the buffeting which the nimble-witted little Hebrew had given him on fistic matters, and he hailed Arnold with relief. Mannie, too, subsided; he held John Hamilton Arnold in a subconscious awe, for Ham was "close up" to Harry Stillman, and doubtless the boss, too; and moreover Mannie had once seen him talking with some elegant women in a carriage in front of a Post Street shop. Ham had his hat off, but he chatted with

nonchalant humor, though Mannie, pouncing like a ferret into a cigar stand to ask of them, learned that one of these women was the daughter of Barron Chatom, attorney for the railroad, a man to whom Police Commissioner Stillman, the mayor, the boss and even the governor deferred, for Chatom and the railroad could make or break any of them. And Mannie saw Edith Chatom extend her hand with a parting smile to Arnold and drive off behind the coachman with the high hat and yellow *pants*. That settled the Headlight Kid: "Always stay in wit' t'ese mutts t'at are strong wit' t' organization—a guy might want somepin sometime from somebody."

"Hello, J. Ham," he began, his rat-eyes on Arnold's fashionable clothes—he would have a coat cut like that with no top pocket. "Wasn't t'at fight a pippin?"

"Didn't see it,' rejoined the young man. He went directly to the bar. "Fergy," said he to the drink-mixer-in-chief, "I want to leave some money with you." He was counting out bills, five of a thousand each, eight of five hundred and some smaller notes.

"How's that?" murmured the pallid barkeeper. "Lord Rex was the only long shot to-day and he didn't carry a thimbleful of money. Fight?"

"Picked up five hundred, but haven't cashed in yet. This—" Arnold watched the saloon man's languid count— "merely velvet."

Ferreri's eyes widened, and Mannie hopped on the bar rail to gasp: "Ten thousand? Have I woke up in th' mint? J. Ham, whose roll is it?"

"Mine." Arnold's voice did not invite, and they

were silent. Louis Ferreri shot a warning at the bartender. This was a foolish "flash" for Ham to make—a man who was mixed in the grand jury scandals and all. Louis lit a fresh cigar and looked with critical pleasure at his reflection in the back bar glass. He was a benign animal, fond of eating, the latest crush in a hat, absorbed with childish vanity in his diamonds. On his watch-fob, his cuffs, rings and scarf-pin he affected a tiger's head design of Roman gold clasping a white stone in its teeth and with garnets for eyes. Besides these he had a forget-me-not of exquisite enamel with a diamond heart, and three others of various settings, but all of purest values and extreme costliness. Like most stupid men he had one single fad which he imagined lifted his conscious dullness, at this point at least, to command attention from the more alert. And these diamonds Louis always carried in a velvet case in his waistcoat pocket. It occupied his indolent mind to change the pin in his cravat for one of the others at intervals of conversation, rubbing the scintillant jewels and watching them in the lights of the cafés and theaters. Within a single evening he might be bedecked with each pin in turn; but on prize-fight nights the slot-machine man wore only the tiger's head pin with the safety catch and deposited the others with Fergy in the cash-register drawer at the Maplewood.

Caressing the forget-me-not over the bar, Ferreri idly drawled his curiosity concerning Arnold's money. "You certainly got next to something good. And, say, anybody been talking to you about Weldy? Somebody's going to get indicted by the grand jury for that registration business, sure, Ham!"

Arnold shrugged indifferently. "I'm through with the funny work. I told you I was going to be married, Louis."

"O, I see—*that's* your bank-roll? How much is she worth?"

"I don't know. She's from Trinity—met her this summer."

"You're always turning big tricks. Money?—and she looked good to me."

"She's the best ever. I'm afraid I'll get fond of her myself. And I'm cutting out the old graft now. It's as easy to be a fifty thousand dollar man as a one thousand dollar man, and I'm going to break with all this."

"Yes?" Ferreri's incredulous curiosity followed Ham's eye about the bar-room. "Going after something big? Your old man up in the pen—haven't stopped working for that pardon, have you?"

"I'm going at it differently. I've been doing dirty politics for Stillman and the city hall three years and what have I got out of it? Now if this girl's got the money—and she owns a strip of redwoods you could drop the town in—I'll shove some of it *right*. Understand? That pardon will go to the governor with the *right* people behind it."

"You're not deuce high with the governor. That big land company down in Stanislaus is too close to the railroad. Chatom's the only man could handle the governor for you, and he—well, what pull have me and you got doing a little politics over the hill against Chatom and the railroad and the land company that wants your old man kept in the pen? Say, Ham, we ain't a flash in the pan with the governor."

"I'll turn the trick. With money I can meet some different people."

Ferreri's wits did not follow at first; there was, at times, a grim satire in Arnold; he would say things that showed, after all, that you had never been close to him, that he was surveying you and himself from some view-point inimitably his own. Louis recalled, as all the Street did, that Arnold's family name had stood for much ten years ago—much that Louis knew of only as his indifferent eye wandered over the social pages of the Sunday papers. It was broken now, almost forgotten; from the only son, the last scion of the house, the years had effaced resentment, shame or hope of reparation. He had accepted, he told himself, with a clear, impersonal survey and he had promised himself, whatever the conditions, to be the master of his life. And so he had come down the way, still seeing his fall clearly, in a sort of philosophic pride at the mordant keenness with which he knew himself and was unmoved, without law, without conscience, without soul. It was as he wished.

"Different people?" Ferreri drawled. "They're all crooks."

Arnold laughed easily. "Naturally. But I'm through with the little ones. With money I can reach the big ones. I mean socially. Money'll make them forget a good deal—and now I'll have some money." He tinkled his glass along the polished wood. "Dad's pretty old for San Quentin. He won't be the same game old fighter that tried to swing the whole San Joaquin into his irrigation scheme. And because he stood wrong higher up the railroad and the land ring smashed him.

He wouldn't take orders, and they got his backers away, and then he signed his name to some paper that wasn't good, and they got him—the other crooks. Ah, well, now I'll swing that pardon. Every day I rub shoulders with more crooks free than dad would meet in a thousand years in prison, but that's all right—I'm not kicking about the game—I'm the son of a con, and that's all right, too. Only now, with money—"

"You can't reach the governor. There's bigger men than you can go to Chatom and Chatom gives the word and the governor programs like a little man. If your old man was clean as Angel Gabriel what chance have you got?"

Arnold laughed: "Money," he repeated; "watch me."

"And a girl on your hands."

"That's all right. I'll treat her fine."

"Ham, you don't lov her." Louis' voice protested curiously. "You—why, no woman in this town ever held you for a little minute."

Ham's mimic laugh rang out. "Well, this kid—she thinks I'm the only thing that ever happened! I had her the first time I met her—she hadn't a chance." And then his cool voice deepened: "And I tell you I'll be fine to her. I'll cut you fellows off the map. What's the use of this? What's all this midnight racket? What's this town ever done for me?"

"It'll do something for you *now*." Ferreri had a sleepy resentment. "Heard the latest? Grand jury's gone into the registration for last August primaries. That'll get pretty close to you—you and Fred Weldy were in the registrar's office, and you packed some

awful raw ones. But you put it through, and Stillman got Weldy into the legislature to help protect the races. O, sure, the whole town knows that, all right! But you—you took some fierce chances—you do things so openly."

John Arnold gyrated his highball indifferently: "Well, if the race-track can't protect its men from the grand jury, Stillman better quit running this town. To hell with the grand jury! We've got five of the superior judges, haven't we? We can hold the supreme court on a pinch, can't we, long as the railroad's behind the track?" But his mood changed: "Well, I'm through. To-night the queer work and I part company. I quit."

The Italian-American laughed again. "Girl," he murmured; "girl! I see you quittin'. They won't let you quit—they've got you. The big fight's only beginning and they need you. And you don't love her. I got a picture of you a family man. Lord, *you!*"

The other was staring at his gaunt face in the mirrors—the thin curls about his white, high forehead, the eyes deep-set, unreadable, dark, with their trick of laughing even in his reserve. "Look here," he muttered, "suppose I did? Suppose there was a way for me? I'm always thinking of the hills, somehow, and to-night she said we'd have a place somewhere there—" he pointed through the garish lights off to the north—"with roses all around the door."

They were silent along Fergy's polished bar. Ham was staring above the wicker doors. Fergy held a pink globe of a goblet up to flick a last bit of lint away, and it hung, its iridescence flung back from every angle

of the room: "That's me," Arnold muttered, "some day."

Ferreri turned. "Let's blow down the line. They're burning champagne in the red fire to-night, and it's only half-past two. The whole town cleaned up on the Native Son. But that little girl—" he signaled to the drink-mixers behind the Maplewood bar. "The house is in—every one."

"All right—" Arnold had briefly hesitated—"Scotch in a high glass."

Ferreri lifted his glass solemnly to his friend and the men in the white aprons: "To the little girl—Ham's little girl!"

Arnold went to the lunch where a clean little Japanese lifted the great silver dish covers. Frank Arasaka—California Japanese are invariably "Franks," or "Joes," or "Charlies,"—smiled with serene friendliness on the young man; a brown-faced, spectacled student of language and medicine, he remembered the days when Arnold had helped him through the English primer. In the Imperial Hotel on Stockton Street, "over the hill," they had argued economics over the raw fish and hot *sake* many a night, for Arnold had been Arasaka's patron when he was a stranger in a strange land. So the little Japanese said, with a hesitant sadness now: "I mek you good-by, Mist' Arnold. I go back to Nippon nex'."

"Home?"

"Yes—mebbe. You been mos' good to mek me English in the study. Now, I go Nippon. My family mos' long, honorable. Nex' month come great Samurai festival—what you say?—solemn? I clean myself—I

mek great thoughts. All night by *shoji* I watch swords of mos' honorable ancestors. I mus' remember if I ben corage—honorable such as them."

"And they come back to judge you—the old fighting men?"

"Mos' exact. All souls awaken! Ol' fighting men ask if I ben corage and honor. You know? No man come dare stand dishonorable before them ol' armor and them ol' swords w'en them ol' honorable ancestors ask. I mus' mek myself clean firs'—then I can watch and answer. O, you ben soldier—mos' honorable—you know!"

Arnold watched him curiously: "You must come clean that night. I see—and what do you call the thing—the festival?"

"Very hard to English. In Japan—The Day of Souls."

The hard-faced American looked again at the little brown, spectacled man, wondering idly why this unmoral, scientifically materialistic heathen, spending his days in books, his nights in the whirling lusts of the town, smiling and serene, should go back across five thousand miles of water to sit one night before the armor of the Samurai awaiting their judgment. Then slowly with a smile, his hand went to the Japanese: "Play square then with those ancestors. It's a fine idea. *Sayonara!*"

He gambled five dollars into one of Ferreri's slot machines without a winning, and gossiped half an hour with Fergy, the others having gone. Then Arnold caught the owl car up Kearny Street and got off at Portsmouth Square. He was a fellow given much to

dreams when alone; when with his friends he had a way of listening abstractedly, but with an encouraging humor of comment. The town called him "square;" the Street nicknamed him, as men do one subconsciously beloved.

But Ham wondered at times why he was such a disaster to himself and those who cared for him; though when he went about, the homeless dogs always followed him and he saw the wistfulness in their eyes and knew that life to them was one long yearning for the possible adventure; and in the eyes of women he saw that which the finality of the morgue records does not show, for it was their secret True Romance; and in the eyes of white-haired old mothers, and the babes who always watched him in a crowd, he saw a wonder which he could not understand, and a peace that troubled him.

As he climbed the hill into Chinatown, the late police detail from the hall of justice greeted him with friendly pleasantries. When he reached the door of his lodgings it suddenly occurred to him that there was no available bed in Miss Granberry's house, and he paused, wondering whereabout he might find a room. Then he saw a paper twisted about the door-knob, his marriage license crumpled, wine-stained, and by the corner light he read the scrawls across its back:

"If you and I together, Sweetheart,"

"Sweetheart, if you and I could roam;"

"If together we did roam, Sweetheart"

"Sammy; O, Sammy!" sighed J. Ham Arnold.

Under the gray, ancient gable he looked down the

hill to the squat roofs of Chinatown and the Barbary Coast reaching to the bay. The day was coming beyond Monte Diablo to the east. It was still and high about him, a clean land above the wolfish town, the place of savages. A vision came to his somber eyes: yes, he was above it all—he had gone back the ways of the years of his life; he had come to a hilltop in the north, there to stand in an inviolate peace, a gladness he had put by, forgotten. And below him lurked the city where the beasts were, beaten, conquered: they lay gross, filled, the weaker dying unheeded, but afar, high on his hilltop he was above this—on his lips a victor's song.

After a while he moved from the wet balcony rail and sat on the rough mat by the door so that he could see the stars fade. Quietly watching them his knees relaxed presently, his shoulders sank against the door-frame, the fumes of many liquors stole to his brain, and he slept.

The light widened over the eastern mountains. Diablo shot a sparkle from its snowy slope. The bay shores grew plain, the town below took form. Within half an hour, because she was from the country-up-in-back and used to early rising, the girl on the couch stirred. Presently she looked drowsily about and started at the strange room. Then she smiled with sleepy luxuriance. From the window the chill air streamed in; she wondered if the children in the big bed were well covered?

Sylvia slipped from the couch and glanced at them. Then she came to the window and put her head through, glancing at the patches of sea and mountain under the coloring sky.

Looking along the balcony she saw a man huddled at the door and, in some alarm, went cautiously to open it. She knew he must be asleep; now, she saw it was her lover.

She threw the door wide and in her night-robe, knelt on the step above him. He breathed gently, his dark face, without its inscrutable trouble, now at peace. The girl studied him quietly; then she noticed the morning damp on his hair and the collar upturned about his chin. She went back and dragged the heaviest blanket from her bed and cautiously placed it over him, tucking it under his form and about his throat. She watched him longer and then, with a smile, reached to the dresser and took the mass of violets from the bowl, shaking the water from the stems. Laughing, she scattered them over him, over the blanket, and by twos and threes and in little garlands, they fell in his face and hair and on the mold of the boards.

She laughed again out of her happiness. It was grand. It was just as she had dreamed, as she wished to believe; he was a knight wandering through the world doing noble deeds, fighting brave battles; he had come to lie before her threshold, guarding it through the dark hours; and now, when the light had come, she could reward him with the flowers he had given her and which she had worn over her heart. She looked down at the brute town; it was stilled—for her, in the night, he had conquered. It was without life; only, over a gaunt hill to the north, lay a drift of fog, like a rag of lace on a beggar's breast.

She looked down again at the violets scattered over him.

CHAPTER III

A little, old woman with a face as wrinkled as parchment under her gray hair, which was parted primly and yet brought down in a wavy loop over each ear, after the fashion of a school-girl, thrust her head through the door leading from the inner hall to Arnold's apartments.

"May I come in, Mr. Hammy?" she said, in the brisk querulousness of one habitually hurried.

"Good morning, Granny," said he, combing his hair at the dresser. "Come in."

Miss Granberry entered. "Are the dears asleep?" she asked. "I didn't want them in the small room next the plumber—he was drunk again." She bent above the children, still in the rear chamber. "The poor dears—the poor dears—but Angelo must be awakened."

Miss Granberry caught the flutter of a gown on the balcony outside in the radiant morning. Her small brown eyes peered cautiously about.

"Bless my soul!"

Arnold turned, waving his hair brushes. "Miss Granberry, this is my wife—she's to *be* my wife—Sylvia."

"Bless my soul; bless my soul!" The little, old woman stood among the scattered violets on the breezy balcony, blinking at the light.

Sylvia gave her hand to Miss Granberry's gray talon. "Married? Well, well, my dears!"

"Pretty near!" laughed Sylvia.

Miss Granberry trembled with delight; it had come, then—the romance with which always she had known she would be concerned. She was a little, shrill-voiced spinster, living in the memories of the Fifties, when she had known the makers of California—the Bonanza kings and the builders of the Southern Pacific—Sharon, Fair, Huntington, Flood, O'Brien, Mackey, Stanford, Ralston—the great names of the Comstock; in some of these families she had been a governess on the intimate relations of a friend; she knew innumerable stories of the early money kings in the mad San Francisco days; she had seen Casey and Cora hanged by the Vigilantés; she had seen the opening of the Palace, and knew of the day its genius jumped from Meiggs' wharf into the bay; she knew by the sureness of household gossip all the tales of incredible extravagance, of barbaric imagination, that had gathered about the Argonautic millionaires' families. And she had seen the curious fatality overtake them; their seed perished for the most part; their great, monstrously ugly palaces on Nob Hill, closed, deserted, mournful relics of the Wonder Age of the Golden State, of the most fantastic era in the history of the republic. The great names, the turbulent families, were now traditions. The little, old woman had seen their glory rise and fall, and she lived on alone, in beggary, unknown, forgotten—to chant, like the chorus of an Æschylean tragedy, on the inevitable hand of fate laid against the mighty and the proud.

For forty years she had retreated before the savage town; she had fought it back from noisome lodgings with her failing strength, while it grew to be a monster, harsh, sordid, unrequiting—the days of gold, of youth, of prodigal friendship, were done. One wondered how the life spark stayed in such a withered, weary little body, performing prodigies of labor, sweeping her frayed carpets, scrubbing the halls with swashes of dirty water, cleaning the windows, making the beds. On Sunday mornings she was an elegant person in a black cap and silk dress, queerly cut, going to Trinity with her Book of Prayers; on week days she was the excitable little shrew, with a heart prodigiously kind, toiling for her lodgers, who were impecunious clerks, itinerant mechanics, peddlers, broken drift of the streets, who paid when they could and were trusted when they could not. The drunken, the improvident, the foolish, the sick, the lame, the despondent, all were hers; she nursed and protected and defended them, denouncing the police if they touched one of her worthless protegés; clothing the naked, forgiving the unchaste and drunken, toiling inordinately meanwhile to pay the landlord, the grocer, and the interest on her mortgaged furniture—this was her life's tribute to the city, and in requital it would some day at the Morgue draw a sheet over her bones.

The old woman was all aglow as John Arnold told of his love affair, all little cries and smiles and wonders; she kissed the girl's rosy cheek; she was hungry for something apart from the stink of the kitchen and the murky halls; she loved clothes, faces, manners of distinction, and the lightness of youth. She must

know all about it; they must stay to breakfast; yes, she would run to the corner for hot rolls, and to Unc' Pop's for bacon. And while she was hustling about with astonishing agility, a step sounded on the stairs leading from the attic, then a tap, tap, tapping—a cane on the wainscot.

Miss Granberry flashed a startled look on Arnold.

"You know, don't you?—it was in the morning papers—a cablegram from Manila? Hush, the Captain's coming."

"The papers? Manila? I have seen nothing."

"Larry's dead. He struck an officer and was dishonorably discharged; and then he was killed in a quarrel at some little place with a big name in Samar. The paper just mentioned it."

"Larry!" Arnold stepped back, his lips tightened. At the bottom of the attic stairs an old man felt his way along. Sylvia's eyes shone with sympathy; she whispered: "Larry? I heard you speak of him—the soldier—"

"My bunky," muttered her lover. "I left him at Cavite. Here's his father."

The Captain turned his clouded eyes on them. His face, with the noble sweep of hair, the mustaches, the stained, gray imperial, had the grand theatricism of another era of strong men; you would have marked him in a street among a thousand. His head inclined; he had heard his name—his right finger-tips went to his bushy brow.

The younger man saluted as gravely in this bit of play to which neither of them ever directly adverted.

"Sir, I heard to-day that a troop-ship had come

from the islands. Any news? Is the Third Squadron still in Samar? You mentioned my son's name as I entered."

Miss Granberry sent a frightened warning to Arnold. The young man looked calmly into the veteran's half-blinded eyes.

"There was some fighting, sir, in Samar, and Larry —well, the Squadron was cut up a bit, I understand."

"Eh?—and my son?—" The old man's eager voice trembled.

The group was motionless. Arnold's cool tones broke the constraint.

"I was going to tell you, Captain. Larry can't return with the regiment. He'll be delayed a bit—he was—well, a bullet through the arm."

"Wounded?"

"On the firing-line. Just a scratch, but—blood-poisoning. They sent him back to Cavite and cut off his arm."

A proud joy shot through the Captain's face. He cleared his throat oracularly.

"An arm?—bah! It'll make a man of the boy. A mere scratch—you should have seen our colonel, sir, at Kenesaw—his shoulder shot to ribbons—"

"I know," faltered Arnold, to this familiar story. "But Larry can't come soon as we hoped. You'll be patient, Captain."

The Captain's grand air heightened. His fingers went to the little button of the Loyal Legion on his coat. Ah, no, it was nothing! He was a Georgian, but he had fought for the North because, under the same flag, his father had fought with Jackson at New

Orleans. He had cut himself off from his people, but after the war, angered at the Reconstruction, he had resigned from the national service. They had been hard years since, while a film was blotting the sun from his eyes, but he had not complained. Never would he accept a pension from a Government that had treated his South as it had been treated; one could be proud, one could be clean, one could be patient—it was enough that one had served. These were strange days now—a commercial gabble of corruption and the ways of money, hard to understand; and a man who had fought at Shiloh, at the Wilderness, and had caught his dead colonel at Kenesaw, and was going blind, had better stay from it. He had one son, but Lawrence had been a wild fellow—a profligate with this town man, Arnold, in camp and bar-room. Well, maybe he would redeem himself in the Philippines with Lawton and MacArthur. One could be patient. The poverty of an attic was nothing, loneliness was nothing, darkness was nothing, if one could wait, patient and clean, for this reckless boy to come back redeemed on the firing-line in the honor of service.

The Captain glanced about, nodding sagely. He was trying to conceal his proud joy; it was better than one could expect—to have one's son wounded in such a petty affair as this in Samar. His hand went to the scar in his bushy brow as he frowned to dissemble his thoughts.

"An arm gone—um—um! I hope they won't baby the boy. What of his comrades, sir—and the action—what was it?"

The young man took the veteran's arm and led him

apart from the women. "Captain," he whispered, "it was splendid! A sergeant at the Presidio, just returned, told me. It was a place called Bamboang. The fellows held an old church all day against thousands. Larry was shot trying to drag a comrade from danger—he'll get the Honor Medal!"

The Captain started in the infinite issues of feeling. The dim hall light glimmered in his eyes until he saw, through a fulguration of glory, his son, a heroic figure, a symbol of the older Republic, clean, ennobled, transfigured. He turned to the dark to hide his brimming tears from Arnold.

"Well, well, sir!"

They saluted each other gravely as two officers at parade. The veteran turned to the stairs.

"And, Captain, it's all right about the money. Larry doesn't need it. We've arranged so that he'll send it to me, and I'll hand it to you—three dollars a week. It's fine of Larry."

"I thank you, sir." The Captain's air was brusk. This was irrelevant, this money talk. He went down the front stairs, tap, tap, tapping with his cane, to walk the block in the sunshine, remembering always that a soldier must keep his shoulders back.

Arnold stood with folded arms gazing after him. "I am an elegant liar." He checked a smile. "The Cáptain's got small use for me. Larry—it's tough to go that way!"

His mind went back to his dead bunky; to the moonlight nights on the Lunetta—to Inez and Joséfa, and that Tagalog girl at Santa Ysabel. He had loved in many ports and byways; he thought of his days of

youth, of the price he had paid for them; of the dead trooper sleeping in Samar—a bit of his own life was bound up in the moonlight on the island shores. May[illegible] Larry was the happier man!

A touch came to his arm; his bride of to-day was looking up at him.

"He wasn't so bad, was he—Larry? Did he quarrel with his father? Wouldn't he come home?"

"Little girl, he was just like me—my bunky."

"Miss Granberry says that you've been paying his father's room rent and for his meals and pretending all the time that Larry sent the money. What'll you do now?"

"Kid, I don't know. Do you think I'd tell the Captain that his son was killed in a dirty barrack row? He's too blind to read the papers—he never sees any one—he'll never need to know."

"He'll just wait," said Miss Granberry. "The grand old man!"

"Let him wait," retorted Arnold. "We'll muddle through somehow!"

The old woman went bustling off to get her rolls and bacon. The two lovers sat in the grimy little kitchen facing the air-shaft; on one side was the gas stove, on the other the dining-table, with the cracked oilcloth. "Admiral Byng," the Granberry parrot, swung on his dirty perch in the window and squawked at the Liquor Store cat, who, utilizing the entire building in his forays, had arrived for breakfast with Granny.

The old woman's voice came in an excited query from the stairs. Then she flew breathlessly to the

kitchen. "A guest, dearie," she cried. "A gentleman to see my little mountain girl!"

Following Miss Granberry was a tall man whom Sylvia seized on in delight. His face and neck were burned to a dull red, the powerful jaws were clean-shaven, his eyes very blue; and he wore the "best clothes" of a woodsman—funeral black, with a little butterfly tie of brilliant purple under his celluloid collar. He carried a cotton flour sack filled with some protuberant stuff under one arm, and about his clean shoes crawled a small pointer pup of the most unimaginable color as dogs go. That pup was only a shade more subdued than the woodsman's necktie.

The stranger's eyes shone with satisfaction as he released Sylvia's fingers.

"I brought the pup," he began, "an' I'm the delegate to this weddin'."

"Why, Louisville!" she cried in her laughing. "It's just fine!"

"An' Miss Winkle sent you some dried apples," continued the man from the North. "Came from the clearin' over the ridge on the South Fork—yes, seh!"

"Jack," began his bride-to-be, in some confusion, "this is Mr. Banway. He's head faller at Camp Nine. The boys all call him Louisville."

"Bo'n in Kentucky when I was quite young," said Mr. Banway, with a pleased and reminiscent joke. Young Mr. Arnold extended his hand genially, as the woodsman inserted a finger to hoist his celluloid collar.

"Glad to meet you—any friend of Sylvia's—"

He was interrupted by a cry from the girl. She was

staring at a squab of a child in denim overalls, his yellow curls under a knit red cap, who was peering trustfully about the balustrade.

"O, *Louisville!*"

"The Camp said to bring it to you. Mrs. Baker went to Arcata, an' there wasn't a woman left at Nine. We all rememb'd you said you'd take it. So the skid-boss give it them overalls—"

Sylvia was laughing over the small man, laughing and blushing and twisting his curls. Arnold, too, fell to smiling at her pretty confusion and with his own wonder.

"Its mother cooked at Nine," said Sylvia; "then she died at the hospital in Arcata last summer. Mrs. Baker and I cared for it when I came down from Trinity to the big trees. All the boys in the slashin' stand by the Cookhouse Kid—he's so little."

"And is he—it—ours now?" inquired Mr. Arnold.

"Well, I don't know—I promised—because I had nothing to do—and the boys all said—"

"And that pup? Louisville, what's the matter with the dog?"

"Belonged to an Arcata dye-house man," related Mr. Banway solemnly. "Used to be white, that spike-tail pup. The dye man thought he'd make him into a walkin' adve'tisement, so he put him in the blue vat an' then tried to paint 'Arcata Dye Works' on his ribs in red and yellow trimmin's. Well, that fool dog began to pe'spire before he got dry, and the colehs run, and when the pup saw himself, he did, too, and crawled into the bay. Reguleh Easteh-egg dog afteh them colehs run. Dye man was so 'shamed o' that job

that he sent the pup up to the woods to bleach. Trouble was he couldn't boil the dog so's the colehs'd stick. We gave 'im to the Cookhouse Kid, an' he sits round remorseful, speculatin' if he hadn't oughte' been boiled, afteh all. Reguleh scrambled-egg dog."

"Now he's a real lavender," added the girl from the country-up-in-back.

The grave-faced young man of the city stood looking at his bride-to-be, at the pup, at the dried apples and the Cookhouse Kid; there were some aspects of matrimony that apparently he had not considered. The Northerner seemed to read his study.

"They all go along with *heh,*" he added; "sorteh mutual."

"Louisville, I don't mind marrying the dog and the dried apples, but I don't know about another man's baby—"

"John, it's such a little one!" cried the bride-to-be.

J. Hamilton Arnold removed his hat and bowed with debonair mischief.

"Sweetheart, with you I'd marry the whole of northern California. Blue dogs and babies?—why, it's simply great!"

"Come to breakfast," cried Miss Granberry from the smoky kitchen, and they were marshaled in; Sylvia with the manikin, and Mr. Banway with the dried apples. The black-eyed Italian children left the room, having eaten; and Angelo took his sister of five down to Happy Alley to play while he went to the flower market. Miss Granny's kitchen had never had such a packing about its little wall table; and never was the old woman so vivacious, so happily engrossed.

She heaped their plates and scolded when they would have no more; she asked a multitude of questions. In fifteen minutes she knew the history of the waif from the big woods, of Mr. Banway, the price of condensed milk in Camp Nine, what a "soogler" was, and how long the skid-boss had had the boil on his neck; and had, in return, given the woodsman three different remedies to carry back for the afflicted. With each revelation of the big woods and their life she was swamped in shrill wonder; forty years of lodging houses had not dulled her eager, child's appreciation of the marvelous world.

"Some of them redwoods along Little River is three hundred and sixty feet high," concluded one of the woodsman's tales, "an' the tops grow into a mat so thick the sun neveh reaches the ground, and down in the glades the ferns grow six feet tall. By Mighty, what a silence!"

Miss Granberry could not believe it; her black eyes sparkled, her mouth worked as she groped for a sufficing imagination.

"And beyond the redwoods and the camps in the slashin's," added Sylvia, "is the country-up-in-back, where *I* came from!"

"Sixty mile o' mountain trail to Trinity," resumed the woodsman; "that's how we brought *heh* out! The's no fog up-in-back—no ferns an' redwoods—it's green an' sunny all the way."

"And *flowers!* How'd you like to see seven miles of poppies along a trail, and great blue and purple spikes and daisies and buttercups—so many flowers on so many hills that they are just a *blur?*"

"An' nobody but the coyotes to smell 'em," Mr. Banway confirmed.

The little, old lady sat back. In her grimy air-shaft, under the parrot's shelter, she had one hyacinth bulb that Frank Arasaka, the Japanese medical student, had given her when he had lived in the block and had received her help through the fortuitous, occidental wisdom of "Is That a Cat?" Long she had tended the hyacinth, but it would not blossom, and here was a flower empire lorded by the yapping coyotes! She fell into a daze, and even when the guests extricated themselves with a well-generaled manœuver of chairs, from the kitchen, she was still absorbed.

On the sunny balcony over the alley Arnold offered Banway a cigar.

"When's the big show coming off?" queried the guest.

"Some time to-day. It won't be much, but you're in on it, Louisville."

"You goin' to be good to heh—you town man? You see, the camps'll neveh fo'get that preacheh's girl. He was the only man c'd come into the woods an' tell us about ou' souls. All the big, rough country from the South Fo'k to the sea sorteh raised heh. How-so she come to be a laidy, I cyan't see, but she is."

"She's the best I ever knew."

"I hea'd you'd been a pretty wild one?"

"Well, you know how a man knocks around."

"I like you, som-a-way. I see you lookin' right at dogs and babies—an' that old woman wouldn't be you' friend if you weren't tole'able. I guess that God

A'mighty'll pass up a lot of deviltry in them that smiled an' didn't fear His world."

"Old man," said Arnold, "let's go have a drink."

They went down and through Unc' Pop's grocery, with its shelves of soap and canned goods, and kegs of fish and pickles, to the tiny bar.

"When A'mighty made a good woman," said the woodsman, as a toast, "I guess He knew what He needed to get us all stampeded fo' His Kingdom."

Mr. Banway grew solemnly inclined after that; he excused himself, saying he had business on the city front and would return at four o'clock for the marriage, yet indeterminate as to the exact hour. Arnold and his bride were to shop.

He took her down through the sunny morning affairs of Kearny Street, loitering here, there, at the windows. Sylvia lost her night-dread of the city; its glitter, light, motion, the sheen of silks and the jewels in the store fronts came to overwhelm her, and she flitted from one charm to another, with little cries of delight, a bound of soul, a woman finding her own in the primal love of pretty things, the gay, comforting vanities for which cities are builded.

Arnold took her to the very best shop in the city, and when she became lost in the crush, for the fashionable trade was at its flood, he went to the vestibule of the store to await her. Near him in the street was a smart victoria, the horses superb, the coachman correct, the single occupant a young woman about whose throat was swathed a fluff of chiffon and feathers. She was comfortably fixed in the cushions apparently awaiting some shopper. The young man's mind dwelt

on this, for at once he glanced from the carriage back into the store and turned aside by the doors. But another young woman, coming out, had seen him. She went directly to him with a surprised smile, greeting him with distinct pleasure as though she had come on an opportunity long deferred. She was tall, exquisitely tailored in a gray morning dress, with the freshness of grooming added to her radiant health; a woman of thirty, clear-skinned, fine-looking from a distinctive, deliberate originality and shrewdness, that surmounted the conventionality of clothes and class, and marked her at once as a Californian born and bred.

A studied indifference enveloped Arnold as he took the hand she offered; he would rather not have met her.

"But you couldn't evade me, could you?" she said clearly.

"Not in the least," he laughed, shaken from his defense; "we haven't met often of late, Edith. I thought perhaps you had accepted the situation."

"That you had resolved to lose us altogether? Of course you'll say you've been busy—another amateur opera, wasn't it, up in the Valley?"

"I needed a vacation, and, still more, the money."

"Of course you did. I remember when you and Watt were suspended from the university, and both borrowed money of me to run down to Honolulu until your respective dads could look at the matter differently. You haven't improved a great deal."

"And I've had more than a chance in the past eight years."

She turned keenly to affirm an impression that a shade of bitter satire was in his careless humor. Miss

Chatom knew vaguely his way of life; she had tried patiently ever since the ruin of his father's fortunes and reputation to make a friend of Jack Arnold, who had been her playmate in their Sonoma County childhood, and a chum of her brother Watt through a desultory college career that ended when the elder Arnold was sent to San Quentin for the wrecking of the Irrigation Company through a floating of illegal bonds. That was before Barron Chatom reorganized the company and came to the city, where he had risen to power and wealth on the foundations that had ruined Selden Arnold. The elder men had been business friends; the children cordially intimate.

When Selden Arnold was convicted, his fortune lost, and his only son dropped from the whirl of the litigious struggle into a trooper's saddle in the Second Cavalry, Watt and Edith Chatom never for a moment wavered in their friendship for Jack Arnold. Edith met him five years later, a returned time-expired man, and received him with friendly eagerness; she could have done much for him, but he consistently rebuffed her. Watt Chatom was busied with his ranching enterprises in the San Joaquin, rushing from the city in his ninety-horse-power machine to tear half the length of the state and surprise his Stanislaus County tenants, and then charging on to San Luis Obispo, where he had another nine-thousand-acre wheat farm. Therefore, he could assist little in the reclaiming of Arnold.

And after a year curious stories came to Edith's circle; she ignored them and still laid stratagems to lure her childhood's friend back to the old comrade-

ship. But John Arnold, himself, would have none of it; he had never been to the great house Chatom had built on Pacific Avenue; he evaded Edith with inscrutable smiles at their inadvertent meetings. She had an irritating feeling that he held their ways apart from a cynical realization of their social differentiation, as much as from his penury or the remembrance of his wounded name, and this galled her with a sense of injustice. For she cared nothing about society in its strict sense; from her assured position, she even disdained it. She went to the best plays, operas, and concerts; she concerned herself with higher club activities, read the best literature, befriended artistic aspirants in painting and music, went among the university people across the bay, and for her recreation drove, rode or played golf at the Presidio. She had been for years engaged to an ambitious man of science, an official of the federal forestry service. She had an honest striving after the best human expression, and but a smiling tolerance for either the self-conscious Bohemianism of San Francisco, or its exclusive circles, a society which hung open-mouthed on the club witticisms of one liquor dealer, and whose season was opened annually with the ball given by another, an occasion which contributed much to the advertisement of his wares.

Therefore she resented John Arnold's arrogation of an essential barrier to their friendship. She cared nothing about his family or personal vicissitudes; she understood that he was "doing politics," in some way or other, for a municipal administration notoriously corrupt; that he was hand-in-glove with an element

evilly dominant; but she also understood that these were the ways of men in affairs. Her father held his power by dealing with or utilizing these same social forces, and she had not touched life poignantly enough to shrink from dissembling these aspects of it. Watt had told her once that Jack lived in a "queer joint" near Chinatown; that he had helped carry his district for the race-track crowd, and could probably get "something good" at the city hall if he went after it.

Beyond that, she had heard little of him except in connection with some of the bitter, perennial newspaper charges of ballot-box corruption, which were too common in the city to be considered; and once, driving on Grant Avenue, she saw him standing, with his collar turned up, gazing in the window of a cheap restaurant—the day after Watt's gelding won the ten-thousand-dollar California stakes at Emeryville.

Miss Chatom tightened the small parcel under her arm. A glance at the carriage showed that her cousin Chrissie was getting impatient. She turned on Arnold with a defiant pleasantry concealing her reproach.

"I don't suppose it's any use to repeat my invitation for you to call, Jack, is it?"

He smiled with regretful conviction.

"I have been indecent about it all. But you'd be surprised if I told you I might wish to—and to wipe out a lot that's past."

"Don't bother about troublesome 'mights.' Come."

"It'll be different," he said; and then, with sudden doggedness, "Edith, I'm going to be married."

She drew back in quick surprise.

"I am. To a girl I met up in the country. She has

some money; and she's shopping now in here." He glanced about and pointed quietly up the store corridor past a crush of women. "That girl—the one in blue—at the glove counter."

Miss Chatom's cool eyes found the objective. Arnold turned from his bride to watch the woman of wealth. Sylvia was much better looking, still there was the ineffaceable thing about Edith that the town man values highly—a superb completeness, a round salience of character; whatever she might have lacked for her life's expression, breeding and the world had artfully supplied.

Edith turned to him with a suggestion of a smile.

"Why, Jack—and money? Is that it?"

"I shouldn't wonder," a bitter defense was behind his smile. "I'm past most anything else, don't you imagine?"

"And you love her?"

"No," he said slowly, and repeated, "no."

She drew from his cool smile. After a while, thinking of it, fixing him with her clear eyes, Miss Chatom said: "You won't—you're not that sort."

"I'm the lone wolf, and I hunt," he murmured. With Edith Chatom, with any one who had the receptiveness of a culture that he had known, he dropped the slang that was his careless habit with his familiars. "Maybe the figure is a trifle forced, but that's it—I'm the lone wolf who doesn't even train with his pack."

"But you won't do this—you can't. You had ambitions once—ideals. You could have raised yourself to anything, despite all. You could have been all that I might have wished for you. And that's a deal. Jack,

I never forgot you—I tried to help, even when you were insolent to me!"

He smiled grimly, again his sufficient self, past the need of excuse, recalling that the height from which she reproved him, the leisured culture that had made her, was based on her father's wealth, which had prostituted the ideals of a state, cohabited with every unspeakable essential of success, and stopped at no law of God or man—that had, in his own obscure corner, corrupted him and made him what he was before her. But his smile turned to an impersonal humoring of a sudden whim.

"It all happened once upon a time," he said; "she was a simple maid of Arcady, and he came riding through the wood. She was fair, and he loitered by the way. He loved her because she was fair, and she turned out to be the rich princess who was under a spell in Arcady until he came. It's a dandy little story—I've thought of it a deal."

The bright-faced girl in the velvet gown of the country was coming toward them, under her arm an enormous package.

Miss Chatom snapped shut her gold-woven bag.

"Jack, if you're worth her, you won't marry her—you won't! If you don't love her, she'll never help you rise, and if you go down, she'll go with you. Don't do it—don't!"

Jack Arnold went forward to relieve his bride of the bundle, to explain that it would be sent by carrier. He smiled gravely at her pretty vivacity as she related her adventures in the big store. Miss Chatom regarded them an instant from the doors and then went to the

carriage by the curb. Some desperate regret was at her heart; it was as though the prelude of a tragedy had been shown forth; one waited for the curtain to rise, and yet knew forebodingly what the climacteric would bring. She stepped up beside her cousin.

"Wasn't that Jack Arnold you were talking to inside?" queried Chrissie carelessly. "Some one told me he was living in Chinatown and was going to be arrested for something or other."

"It was Jack. But all that isn't so, Chrissie."

"Captain Carlin told me once that he was a splendid soldier in the cavalry—cool and silent and obedient—and he was a private in the toughest troop in the service. He did something fine in that march on Peking—he should have stayed in the army."

"Yes," answered Miss Chatom, "if he only had!"

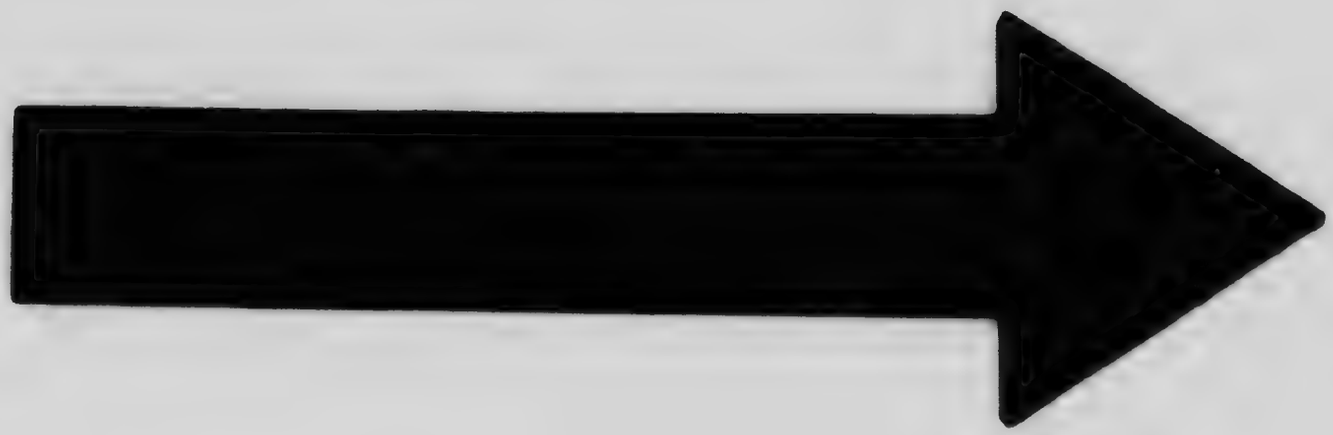
CHAPTER IV

Arnold and his sweetheart idled an hour along Market Street on the sunny side of the Slot. They were scrutinized sharply by every one at the great open-front cigar shops, those peculiar establishments having something of the atmosphere and freedom of the club, indigenous to old San Francisco, which the equable climate fostered—a store opening along its entire front or side to the street, with an ornate iron screen at the top and a tessellated floor from counter to sidewalk. Here the warming sun, never too hot for comfort, streamed in, and the afternoon street idlers, fashionably dressed young men, watched the shoppers and matinée-goers, and gossiped over the form bulletins of the races, or bought the tipsters' sheets hawked about by the newsboys.

Arnold and his bride were by the front of a shoe store, when a bareheaded young man, critically looking over the window display, spoke to him with great heartiness; a sunny-faced fellow, boyish, eager with the day's life, prodigal of its youth. He did not discern at the first glance that Sylvia was Arnold's companion.

"Helio, Hammy! What's doing in the third race to-day. That Stillman colt all the way, isn't it?"

"Hasn't a chance," retorted Arnold; "Innocent brings the money."



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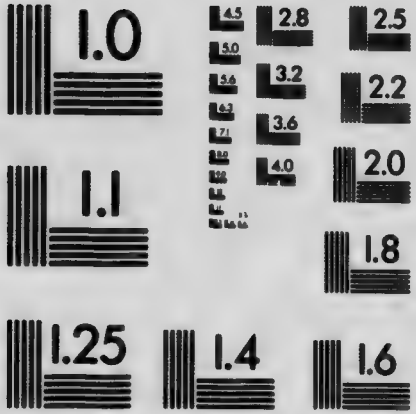

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Eddie Ledyard's face clouded. "They were just telling me—do you suppose Nella knows anything about it? She hears a lot of inside talk, doesn't she?"

"Nella? Where'd you see her?"

"O, I just met her at Skelly's—she was talking with some fellow who is following the wise money at the track. But Innocent—"

Arnold glanced at Sylvia's unconscious study of the store display. He crooked his forefinger under Eddie's nose. "Son, keep away from that girl Nella. She's got sort of a foolishness about you—and you know better!"

Eddie Ledyard laughed blithely. "O, of course—it's only a josh!" Then his eyes gripped their little worry. "But Innocent—good, eh?"

"Only horse in the race." Ham waved a debonair adieu, guiding his bride along the way.

The boyish bookkeeper looked doubtfully after him. Arnold should know; he was close to the "dope," so the Street had it, and he never said things without a reason. Ham didn't play the races much, but now and then his name was buzzed about with a "killing"—he was a fellow who was let in on "good things" by the wise people, which was the reason a certain youthful coterie hung on any word from him. Eddie smiled a farewell at Arnold, who was moving on with the girl in blue. The boys had been more than street friends—Eddie Ledyard was a freshman at Lick High School when Jack Arnold graduated, and they had played on the same foot-ball team the senior's last season.

At eleven o'clock, when the tide of life through

Market Street was quickening, the loiterers turned to a car that would transfer to the Cliff ride. Before the entrance of an office building across the thoroughfare stood a red automobile; a man in the tonneau was signaling sharply to Arnold. Then he descended from the machine with another quick gesture.

Arnold paused. "Sylvia, I'm wanted." He glanced irresolutely about as if loath to take her across to the stranger, yet at a loss as to where she might be left. Then he nodded at the man by the red car and turned to Sylvia. "I'll have to go, Kid. Suppose you wait in the parlors of the big store we were in—just a few minutes."

She was more than pleased.

Arnold crossed to the vestibule of the Security Building, where Police Commissioner Stillman awaited him. He was a brisk, alert-eyed man who had been of the "Handsome Harry" type in his university days, ten years ago, before he acquired his flesh; a joker, a raconteur, of flattering address, never at a loss for a quip, an indefatigable worker, a lieutenant of the boss, a shrewd attorney of the firm of Chatom, Bence and Company. But for politic reasons the police commissioner's name was not on the gilt legend across the windows of the great law offices, to a secluded room of which he now, in great joviality, conducted Arnold. He had sent messengers for the young man that morning and had scoured the city for him the previous night, unavailingly, he said—and it was a matter of importance. Stillman closed the opaque glass window to an outer room, where two

clerks pored over papers and reports; the other window looked down on the spacious court of the building.

The politician offered a cigar and sat back easily in his desk chair, smiling over one of his witticisms. His manner was ingratiating, a patronizing more flattering than unpleasant; his study of the younger man was unobtrusive, but incessant.

Stillman was the right-hand man of the boss, as cool, wily, astute as the boss himself; he was known in the street as the "rent collector." Through his connection with the boss and his position on the police board, where his associates were merely puppets, he was the autocrat of the five thousand saloons and resorts in the city, and of their forty thousand denizens and habitués. From the millionaire liquor dealers—shining lights of San Francisco society—down the descending scale to the Barbary Coast, he, the ov[illegible]rd, drew power through his hidden and intricate associations. With the boss he assisted at extorting money from every evil traffic; their business genius founded and directed a score of enterprises that flourished through their connection with the mayor. With one man they were secretly associated in fire insurance, and it was seen that every saloon and dive-keeper took out policies with this concern; with another they established a great crockery and glass store, and every café and "French Restaurant" needing police acquiescence in its methods saw the logic of purchasing exclusively through this house; they founded a wholesale liquor store, and from it wise dealers purchased their goods; they had relations with three different law firms, and soon every seeker of justice, from the public service

corporations, the Six Companies of Chinatown down to the street drabs and *Pie gow* gamblers, saw the utility of retaining firms that could have it known, though with subtle circumspection, that they had peculiar resources in getting their clients' affairs favorably before the departments of government, the police courts and the superior bench. Under Stillman, the satrap, the tenderloin vote was a political power, astutely commercialized, organized for tribute; and from every source, none too small to be neglected, flowed an incalculable revenue to those Higher Up; and down again, rotting through the social fabric, flowed a portion of the mighty spoils. Stillman, the specialist in elaborating the night life of the town, was answerable to none save the boss and Barron Chatom, the attorney for the railroad, who represented in the secret government of the city the big money, the bribe-giving boards of directors, managers, takers of profit, as Stillman did the liquor men and the gamblers of the track and the "fight combine;" and against this power nothing in the city could stand. Behind Stillman's smiling *camaraderie,* his blithe democracy and power with men, stood the vague figures of the secret rulers of the town, as of America, the money-getters. Stillman looked at the young man in the chair across from him, talking on the San Franciscan's ever-present topic of the prize-ring and the races, before he disclosed deeper affairs.

"Haven't been to Sacramento of late?" he queried, at length, more leisurely.

"Not since the session began," answered Arnold.

Stillman laughed placidly. John Arnold was on the

pay-rolls of the state of California at six dollars a day as a clerk in the senate—but he had not been near the capitol except to be sworn in. The people paid for his efficient services of last November to the "push," in rather good measure.

"You're worth something better, boy," resumed the commissioner, patting his paunch with breakfast content. "You haven't been around the city hall much since the campaign—I've been in shape to find things for you several times. We've been pretty good friends, Ham."

"Yes?" said Arnold leisurely.

"What I'm getting at is this," continued the complacent commissioner: "there's a trick to be turned that's needed badly. Of course you know the grand jury's beginning to push into a lot of things—McMahon would like to land Weldy on this registration business—and one way and another we can't control 'em."

"They can't get Fred." Arnold's voice was indifferent.

"They can," retorted the commissioner emphatically. "They'll indict him to-morrow for fraudulent registration."

The younger man stared incredulously. Weldy, assemblyman from the Fifty-Second, was his friend. In the old days, when his father was going down in the battle of millions over the San Joaquin water rights, Ham used to go every night from the court room to the Star printing office, where Fred Weldy kicked a job press. After Selden Arnold was convicted, and friends and acquaintances fell away from the felon's son, it was

Fred's mother who offered him lodgings in an obscure street; and when he returned from the wars, nursing the bullet he got through a leg in Samar, it was the simple old woman and her apprentice son who took him in when he was again friendless and alone. Two years later Arnold got the union printer into politics, brought him to Stillman's notice, and he was sent to the legislature, wholly untried and inexperienced except for the two months in the registrar's office before the primaries.

Fred was somewhat sheep-headed, and Arnold had been his sponsor in his brief, uneventful political essay in the tenderloin district. But Mother Weldy was proud of the statesman; Arnold had met her only the other day and she showed him her new hat with the shiny black cherries, and told him that when Fred was governor she should go back to Bavaria to visit the *Grossmutter.*

"That's the rub," Stillman was resuming. "I can't shut McMahon off and he's put the grand jury on Fred—he was so sore over the beating he got in the district. And it happens that five or six of the jurymen are from the Fifty-Second and are standing with Mac." The commissioner reached to a memorandum pad: "Selig, O'Grady, Brown—that's the coal dealer Brown, isn't it?—Mayo and Landry." He rubbed his nose. "It's a tough nut to crack. You know the registration was a little raw in spots, and it's certain to furnish an indictment."

"Can't you hold the jury?"

"Not in the Weldy matter. It's McMahon's personal spite to indict him. And we want him badly in

the legislature—the anti-race-track bill, and then—Well, I don't mind telling you. We're behind Chatom for the United States senate next year, and it'll be a scratch fight. We can't afford to have Weldy indicted."

"No," said Arnold, "it would kill his mother."

The commissioner looked on his averted face with sudden cunning.

"It would," he answered solemnly, "and that would be a dirty deal. Weldy's got a future—and the old lady's proud of him." It was the first time Stillman had heard Fred Weldy had a mother.

The younger man sat in some perplexity, while the little square leather clock on Stillman's desk ticked with business haste.

"It's funny about these jurors," Arnold muttered. "Can't they be held in line? Of course I don't know, but I thought you had a drag."

'Son," Stillman leaned to him and tapped his knee, "they wouldn't touch you in a century—but I can't hold them on Weldy. That's why I'm talking to you. You're the straightest man we've got—everybody's your friend about town. Now, Ham, you and Fred were the two clerks who passed all those registration applicants last summer about whom the big squeal is on, but you notice that your name is never brought into it, don't you? The mayor and I were talking about you last night. We decided that the thing to do is to have you summoned before the grand jury and swear that you handled all those registration lists—*all* on the day the specified instances of fraud are charged against Fred."

Arnold sat upright, staring at the other.

"Great and glorious!" he said at length, "you don't want much, do you?"

"We want to keep Weldy in his seat—we're going to need him badly."

"And I'm to commit perjury?"

"Jack, we'll guarantee you immunity. We can swing the grand jury in your case. You can hold men that would eat Weldy. I'll deposit ten thousand dollars in any bank you name as a bond and a wager that they won't touch you. I know *my* men!"

"Harry, I'm out of politics. I've done a lot of dirty work for you, but I quit last night for good."

The commissioner smiled. Arnold's face was averted.

"Well, Fred goes over the road. He'll get five years on every count, if they get it before Judge Ransome or Dolan—and they will. If he's indicted, and it gets into court, I throw up my hands and leave him—I can't afford to stir the matter further."

Arnold laughed grimly. "Sometime the lid will rip and we'll all be blown to hell!" said he. "I see it ning."

The commissioner sighed. "Well, here's a good man —your friend—going in stripes. Fred swears by you —he'll take your word now when I couldn't program him a minute."

The younger man rose and went to the window to stare down in the air shaft. He was thinking of Mrs. Weldy and the way the shiny black cherries had nodded above her kindly face; and of Fred—he had intended to put Fred "right" in his budding career. After all

Fred had done little of the registration; Ham, himself, a lieutenant of the tenderloin push, had sworn in the "floaters" last summer, brazenly, cynically—assured that he would be "protected"—that this, indeed, was what he was there for. Fred's wrong-doing in the matter had been a mere looking on and grinning at the audacity of it all—this revelation of practical politics at the city hall.

"Ham, it's safe as lying in bed," said Stillman steadily. "You know me—I couldn't operate long if my word wasn't good as a bond, could I? Well, I say you'll be protected, if you exonerate Fred. I control enough of the jurors to stop the investigation right there. And you keep the best friend you ever had out of state prison."

The police commissioner's voice had the emphasis of truth. Arnold was scratching on the window glass. Then he turned: "Harry, if I do this thing, I'm done for."

"Ham, you're safe. Boy, I can put behind you bigger things than you ever dreamed of!"

"I wasn't thinking of my safety. I'm not afraid of any indictments by that grand jury push—but, well, I thought I was out of it all—I've gone pretty deep, but never to perjury."

"It's up to you whether or not Fred goes over the bay. I tell you, we daren't make any fight in court for him."

"I'm just thinking," mused the other, "what I ever got out of this game. Harry, you put me into politics. I was pretty clean until you got me to working in the district, and I only started it to help my old man—

because you said you'd see that that pardon of his went through. That was three years ago."

"Arnold," retorted the commissioner, "turn this trick for me and I'll have that matter before the governor in forty eight hours."

"You will?"

"You know the man who can? That's Chatom."

"Chatom? He's cold as death!"

"Chatom wants Weldy left alone for that senatorship fight next session. Didn't I say I could put bigger things behind you than you ever dreamed of? Why, boy, come out of your daze! Don't you see it —don't you *see?*"

Arnold stirred as Stillman's hand struck his shoulder. He wheeled in the revolving chair and stared at the white farther wall of the court. In the outer office he heard the clicking of a typewriter, somewhere else the muffled drone of a voice dictating to a stenographer.

"Seen the old man lately?" Stillman's cool voice came from afar to his thoughts.

"Ne· since he went up. He made me promise never .. see him in the pen."

"Franey was at San Quentin last week. He said the old man was looking pretty worn and broken."

Arnold's thoughts went somberly back to his boyhood, when "the old man" was putting in the great irrigation works that ruined him in the San Joaquin. Losing his mother in his early days, an only child, he had grown up the chum of Selden Arnold, the daring operator in lands and development schemes. Many the ride the small boy had had across the California

hills on his father's saddle horn, while they watched the big ditches dug and the diverti g dams and headgates built. And "the old man" must be worn and broken now—he was seventy-one, and a proud, high fighter for San Quentin. Ham had hoped and worked and intrigued three years for the day when he should free him—then they would go somewhere and begin anew.

"Well, boy, what do you think of it?"

"Chatom can deliver the goods?"

The police commissioner's hand went to the desk telephone: "We'll go see him."

"Never mind," muttered Arnold, "I know he can—that's not bothering me."

For Sylvia's face rose to his moody imagination; he was her knight, without reproach; he had no past with her, he was fair and stainless, and now he would tell her this—yes, he should tell her this!—an unconquerable revolt came to him when he whispered that he need say nothing, he could marry her and be silent. No, the papers would have it, they would hound him and jeer; they might even, after all, indict him in the grand jury room, and he would be the storm center at once for a mighty struggle, for the old order was breaking. A district attorney in whom the organization could not trust was in office and ambitious for a record.

And at once Sylvia, her gray eyes filled with doubt, with trouble and with pain was before him; if he did this act he was in . . net—they had him; he was again a rounder of the tenderloin, a story-teller about the bar-rooms, an idler on the street corners, at the fight clubs and at the races; and when the time came he

again would "do politics" for his master, taking the same brazen, defiant chances, heeding nothing, caring nothing.

But there was Fred Weldy who had always been pretty straight, and his "old man" who had suffered overmuch from his dogged enemies.

Arnold wheeled and faced Stillman. "When's this to be done?"

"This afternoon."

"What!"

"I'll see that you're summoned—I have information of every move they make. Our men in the grand jury room are standing pat. I want you to go before them at three o'clock this afternoon and swear that you were the official in the registrar's office on August the sixth, last, who swore in the twenty-two voters they allege in their complaint to be fraudulently entered."

The young man looked attentively at the politician, who smiled, with a hand upraised at the door, and said: "Now, don't mix in that push at the city hall, and don't mind the papers and the threats and the roars. I'll put everything behind you, now—the big men, the moneyed interests, the railroad that wants Chatom in the senate and can't afford to lose Weldy in the next legislature—I can put the whole damned system from here to Wall Street behind you. Stand right, and there's nothing can break you!"

Arnold nodded and left with a smile. On the street corner without, in the sunshine and the rushing life, he paused, his lips gray, twitching, and tore open an envelope he took from his pocket. It was a warrant for one hundred and sixty-eight dollars for his month's

"services" to the people of the state of California as a senate clerk. He smiled again over the paper.

"Only a little," he muttered, "just a little steal." He looked up at the sunny sky; the town seemed tamed and dull, the buoyant morning gone. "Well," he murmured again, in a sort of patient relief, "I guess it's best. I don't love her—it's been fine this morning, but after all, I don't love her. This lets her out. Edith's right and Nel's right. I'll buck it through for Fred and the old man—but, O, little girl!"

Sylvia met him in the parlors of the great store. They boarded a car for the Cliff, and he was quiet and gentle, even more than she had ever seen him. She was radiant in the cheerful day; pretty, gracious, pleased with the way she had seemed to compromise with this large, new life. A resolve to be tolerant of everything and every one; to see, to know, to live to the full, to be the woman—came to her. In the crowded store parlor she had uttered a prayer, as she listened to the clangor, and now a wonderful happiness had enveloped her. Everything would be right now. She had given herself to this man and his life; she would glorify both with her love.

They walked along the sands below the Cliff, looking at the illimitable Pacific, the flick of a sail in the blue, the sun warming the fresh wind—who couldn't be happy on such a morning? Presently Arnold smiled down at her ingenuous chatter. He packed the dry sand in a heap for her to sit on, and sat by her holding her hand, regardless of the people sunning themselves about.

"I never saw the ocean but once before, and that was

when I came down from Humboldt. And when we rode over the long trail on the ridge back of Little River, Louisville showed it to me—just a tiny blue over the great redwoods miles away! O, it was beautiful—and, I thought of *you!* You didn't come to Trinity by the coast, did you? You don't know how black the slashin's look after the fires, and how big the trees are, and how the fog hangs low in the cañons and the green hills peer through—everything's so big it scares one!"

"But that's what I want. I'd like to own a hill, clean and big and high in the north—little girl, wouldn't that be fine?"

She laughed. From his pocket she took the marriage license, stained with wine and marked with cat tracks, and opened its pleasing width on her lap. "John Hamilton Arnold," she mocked, "aged twenty-nine, and a *white* man!"

"Not now," he muttered; "black as the rim of hell!"

She started at his tone.

The man suddenly sat up and shook the sand from his sleeve and did not look at her. Then he turned toward her, dropping his eyes from hers to the marriage license fluttering in the wind under her hand.

"Sylvia, do you know what you're doing? Do you know what I am?" He watched now a wave crest from the ocean break so near that its salt spray splashed the sands at their feet. "I'm a rounder in the tenderloin—nothing else. I'm a desperate failure. I had a chance to study law in the biggest firm in this town—I studied it just ten months; I had a chance to go to college—I went just eighteen months; I had a chance

to stick at music with this voice of mine—and I threw it away; I went in the army and all I did was to get shot in the leg by some *Kackeyack*. I came back to this town, and what have I been since? A grafter, a hanger-on of the worst crowd under God's sun. Do you realize it?"

"You told me once you were *almost* a gambler."

"Yes, I tried to cut in with a book at Emeryville track—and I quit broke. Wally Walters and I wrote a musical burlesque once and I tried to land it on O'Farrell Street—and the bunk men held us up."

He saw she was puzzled by his town jargon. "I mean if we'd bribed the grafters around the theater we'd have had our show put on. I'm just telling you all this to have you see what I live in—the cold, fierce, dirty game it is—and this is only the least of it all."

"It isn't right," she said slowly. "John, you mustn't!"

"Nothing's right—it's a big graft. I never had a man come to me with a straight proposition in my life. I never tried to spring a straight game myself that some crook didn't block me." He poured a handful of sand into his hat. She saw the thin curls blow about his white forehead. "Kid," he went on, "I never had anything get so close to me as you have—I never wanted to be square so badly in my life as I do now."

The girl's gray eyes filled; the radiance of her morning was dying.

"I guess it's 'cause you love me," she whispered.

He stirred restlessly.

"Look here. Last night you placed ten thousand dollars in my hand to keep for you, you played all night

in my rooms alone. You simply floor me with your way of looking at things—and trusting me."

"Why not?" she said, staring at him.

"Sylvia," he retorted, "do you know who I am? I'm Seld Arnold's son."

"Arnold? Seld Arnold?" She was thinking hard, then she started.

"My father's in San Quentin. You must have heard of the big case in the San Joaquin. All the farmers hate him—he financed the big irrigation works and when the crash came a lot of them were ruined. The railroad smashed him because he supported Pennoyer for governor—the public doesn't really know, but that was it. They won his financial backers away, and then the old man did a foolish thing."

She looked away at the sea; a tremulous twitch of her chin was all that he saw of her suffering.

"I know, now. I was a little girl, but I remember. My father lived there then and—he lost everything—church and all. We moved to Trinity and took up some timber land."

"Well, we did it—we ruined half that country."

The girl rose on one knee in the sand, looking intently at his somber face. A slow mischief came into her eyes; she half crept toward him and then she leaped against his shoulder, her firm arms about his neck, her clean breath on his cheek. Laughing, she kissed him again and again, overwhelming him with her belief in him, her trust and love of him. The passers on the sand, the carriage people on the Cliff drive, looked on them amused.

He was confusedly trying to put her back. "Don't,

little girl—don't!" he whispered. "Let me tell you—let me explain—"

"What do we care?" she cried joyously. "Suppose your father is in prison, and suppose he did ruin mine? O, we're young and free, and that was long ago!"

"But that isn't it. No, you'll have to know."

His face made her draw back; her laughing eyes shrank from his steadiness; she sat on her heels in the sand.

"What do you mean, John? Isn't it all right?"

"I told you the kind of man I am. I was square, wasn't I?"

"Well, I guess you told me most the worst and I forgave you!"

"There are some things I can't tell. The whole town would smile if I tried to explain that you were *straight* after you had stayed at my place last night, but no matter. I've been square."

She sat staring doubtfully at him. The silence grew long. He dug his fingers into the sand and poured it in a little yellow stream from one hand to the other. Without looking at the girl who was trying to put back the straying hair from her ears, he resumed.

"I can see it all, now—I can look ahead to all my life. Sylvia, I brought you here to tell you—I wouldn't have you in it for anything!"

"What do you mean?"

"Hadn't we better go back to town?" he evaded. "Haven't you some friends you can stay with to-night?"

"To-night? What do you mean, John?" She looked

at him in an inexplicable horror now. His stern face was not averted, steadfastly he dared look at her.

"Sylvia, here's your money—every cent. That's all I was after. I was just playing you—that's all."

She could not answer, she could not look at him.

"But aren't you—aren't we—"

He took the need of speech from her, gently, as if to shelter her.

"I'm done for—that's all. And I'm glad—for it gave me a chance to be square with you. Little girl, it's for your good—the simple, honest soul in you. I'm not going to marry you, Sylvia. I don't love you."

The girl rose. Slowly she faced the keen sea-north. There the redwood forests were, the gloom of the hills, the silent places. She looked into the wind over the ocean, trying to fasten back the wayward brown hair blowing about her face. She turned to the east, and there the city lay under a dun cloud, the brute town from which, for twenty hours, his arms had sheltered her. Now— Never had she been so lonely. She had not dreamed that any one could be so sad, the wind so chill, the world so desolate. Mute and dry-eyed, she faced again the northern sea.

"It came over me this morning," he went on slowly. "I saw how I had treated you. Yes, it must be that something awoke in me—I saw so clearly."

"Something awoke in you," she whispered. "Your soul, I guess."

He looked at her for a time; it seemed some tremendous hope was rising in him, and then he went on quietly.

"No; I just want to be square somewhere. There're

not many things where I've a chance, but I wanted one, and that was you. Maybe there's a God who watches and believes—maybe He'll understand how a fellow wanted to get back and couldn't; how, maybe, he found his soul but it was asleep, and while he shook it and cursed it and smashed it, it wouldn't waken. Maybe, if there's a God, He knows. I couldn't make anybody else understand."

"Don't," she whispered, but he went on slowly as before.

"Well, with you I did my best—or worst. I can't tell which. Only it seems like I must warn you off. I'd rather do that now, Sylvia, than sometime have you look at me and know and feel—when it was too late—"

"Yes," she had a strange pathos of faith in the look she gave him, "I know. Something's fighting in you—your soul—and there is a God—yes, a God who cares. Else you wouldn't care, I tell you; else you'd never care to save me. Yes—you've a soul and it's trying."

"Perhaps," he muttered, "and perhaps there's the God you pray to. But I never have believed—I've never cared."

"Believe now," she answered. "You're leaving me, and I'm only asking that,—believe and try, O, try!"

He looked on her in such dumb wonder out of his misery that at last her tears were falling that he could be so stricken and so still.

"Let's go," she whispered, and checked the sob. "But there's God who cares, and I'm caring always; and you can believe and you can try all your life long. Now, come," she added. And then, as they went along toward the hotel overhanging the ocean rocks, Arnold

silent in bewilderment, she cried out, as if in joy: "And I've made you better, and you can't forget!"

Within the dining-room she paused by a small table, laying down her gloves and the little silken case which held the money he had that morning withdrawn from the Maplewood and given back to her. "I think I'll fix my hair," she said. "It's all blowy."

And again, with wonder at her gentleness, he watched her go to the dressing-room. He tried to cry out and it was a mutter: "God cares!" and he repeated it not knowing what he said: "God cares—God cares!"

A waiter smoothed the cloth and set the silver, while Arnold stared down the sun brilliance on the wet coast leagues to where the California mountains rose, a blue barrier.

"I did it wrong," he muttered. "She doesn't understand. I told it wrong, somehow—somewhere."

The seals on the ancient rocks barked in silly bravado; on the drive the carriage wheels glittered; on the beach children shouted. The young man saw one, bare-legged in the winter wind, sturdily tugging at its pail of sand, and wondered if it was not cold; he, himself, shivered in the draft down the corridor. Then he glanced at his watch—she had been gone eight minutes. He waved away the approaching waiter. Looking down the cliff, he saw some men on a pinnacle gesticulating and pointing at the seething whirlpools at its base. From a window below him a man's bald head protruded; he, too, was gesturing. In the yeasty waves plunging among the rocks eighty feet below, a blue drenched object was boiled up and sucked under.

He dashed up in a swift fear, staring out in the sun-

radiant net of spray hiding the caverns. But it was a bit of f...sion of the sea. Then he whirled about at a touch, with a face ashy as the rocks. A small tightly-bottoned boy, who sold cigars about the tables, held a paper to him.

"Table seven,' he said, "single gent—it's you. Lady gave me this for you. She took a car."

"Car? Did you see her take the car?"

"Yes, sir. Blue car. Haight Street line, ten minutes ago. She told me to wait that long."

Arnold took the note. Below the ornate letter-head of the hotel was written in Sylvia's girlish hand:

DEAR JOHN—I can't understand, but never mind. I believed in you always and I prayed. If you don't love me, it's all right. I told you there's a God to understand. And I won't take the money. I've more, and maybe this will help you through it all. You've always been fine to me, and I'm all right. I'm thinking about home—but it's lonely in the country-up-in-back.

Always, SYLVIA.

At ten o'clock that night Arnold wandered into the Maplewood saloon. His face was flushed, his eyes sparkled alertly, shooting nervous glances at the habitués, but he spoke to none. Ferreri idled over the bar; he was ignored. Cronies spoke curiously to him; a buzz of comment followed him as he passed to the rear of the establishment under the blaze of the electric lights. He went along the passage by the gold room, famous for its political conferences, to the tapestried corridor by the curtained boxes. At the farther end of

the passage, near the ball-room, he leaned unsteadily aside to allow the exit of a waiter, and then, being under a light, he mechanically drew an evening paper from his pocket. In the course of a two-column story, pungently satiric, on the current investigation into scandals affecting the municipal government, was a paragraph which Arnold folded over. It read:

"Another witness before the grand jury this afternoon, was J. H. Arnold, formerly clerk of registry under Blasingham. It is alleged that Arnold's testimony directly refuted the evidence that has gone to show Assemblyman Weldy's connection with the fraudulent registration. The former registry clerk swore that he alone was on duty when the registrations cited in the evidence as illegally entered, were sworn in, and further, that they were regular registrations. Arnold was defiant in the extreme in giving his testimony, relying on a well-established pull to protect him, but it is said further investigations may result in his indictment for perjury."

About each green-paneled polished wall of the dancing-room, on a border of carpet, were small tables, and though the hour was early the place was well filled. Through the smoke and above the voices, the idling notes of a piano strayed. A woman in one of the groups at the tables—a magnificent creature with a regal yet merry face, a "coon shouter" of the music-halls—was humming, though her velvety contralto raised it to more than this, an aria from Rigoletto.

"La Donna e Mob-il-e," she sang and then smiled

languorously to Arnold. They had been together in the chorus of the Tivoli opera in the days of Collamarini; she knew him as all the women of the night knew him—as they turned on street and in café to look at him, the penniless jester who gave them nothing save his friend's smile.

"I heard Arnold had married a million," put in her companion, a diminutive jocky of the Santa Anita stables. "He ought to make good, that guy; the whole town's open to him everywhere."

The "coon shouter" shrugged her shoulders. *"La Donna e Mob-il-e,"* she hummed, and then, because Wally Walters at the piano fingered the bars of a sentimental refrain, her purring contralto followed:

"Where the Blue Hills rise
'Neath the sunny skies—"

The young man who had been coming toward the singers turned to a side door. When this again opened, the woman, indolently slurring her song, saw him, his face to the north, watching the stars above the city hills.

CHAPTER V

Kearny Street—in Old San Francisco, now for ever gone—began at Lotta's Fountain in the city's heart and ended in a cliff tumbling to the sea. Within this mile and a half was the most cosmopolitan life ever packed along an equal thoroughfare on the world's face. Every type, vocation, business, there found standing and shelter, from the carriage rich, shopping at one end of the street, to a huddle of Basque shepherds, down from the Sierra to escape the October snows, idling winter-long in the windowless wine-shops, at the other; from the making of a great newspaper to a Mexican peon braiding horsehair *riatas*. Every race of Asia—Japanese, Chinese, Coreans, Burmans, Hindoos, Russians; peoples from all Polynesia—Filipinos, Malays, Kanakas, Aleuts; from the nameless ports of the South Seas; from every port of Europe, Hammerfest to the Ægean Isles; from Africa, refugee Boers and blacks; from every turbulent republic of the Americas —the complex, hybrid, New World type in its evolution, Latin, Celt, Anglos and Northmen, mingling but not mixing with the racially triumphant Mongol—all, and in numbers so proportionably equable that no one element drowned the other, here lived and bartered or sojourned from the shipping tributary to this eddy of the world stream.

At one end of Kearny, money rings, cabals of politicians, controllers of the state's affairs, makers of a people's thought; at the other, Cantonese peddlers haggling with Tuscan fishermen over the White Devil's nickel, each howling at the other in an alien but common tongue. Christian churches of every type; a temple of Greek Byzantine, a shrine of Buddha, a housetop where the Mussulman faced the east, an alley cellar where a Polynesian sailor groveled to his idol of clay —all faiths were there, and all unbeliefs, from the oriental acceptance of fate to the uncertain philosophy of the occidental agnostic; and over and about the clamor and the complacence, shrill and acrid with false brasses and bleating reeds, the commercial snarl of Asia drowned the others with its myriad josses obscured by blue punk smoke and silk-gowned, money-changing priests.

The great, the rich, the downtrodden, the namelessly foul, all lived in the sixteen blocks from the fountain to the bay; all businesses from tawdry foreign shops to the emporiums of merchant princes whose doors advertised that seven languages were spoken within; cafés for every purse, from the exclusives and the race-track idlers drinking champagne at a table fifteen floors above the street to the windowless, basement wine-shops of Telegraph Hill; all vices, for here the hoary iniquity of the Middle Kingdom and the Sea Islands traded namelessly with the wickednesses that the West had brought down from Sodom and Babylon; and the morphine fiends lolling about the Stevenson monument in Portsmouth Square, leered across at the venal justice of the city courts; the dragon flags of the Chinese

roofs mocked the foresworn ideality of the Mount and Magna Charta.

And into this glut of alien life the white race poured all that was picturesque, bizarre, inordinate, from the Rio Grande to Great Slave Lake; all that the defiant young West could enrich and send to rot and revel in the port. Miners from Tanana, Pelly, Amargosa and the spaces of Death Valley and Nevada; cowboys from the Inyo deserts and Arizona, Utah and Montana; lumberjacks from California valleys as little known as the fastnesses of Thibet; soldiers from every post between the two frontiers,—lithe men with burned, lean faces, the scuff of a panther's footpads in the nervous spring of their heels, ready with life, eager for play in the ingenuous, shrewd humor of the American.

Old San Francisco was as inevitable to the dweller beyond the Rockies as God to Mahomet; the very phrase with which it was summed spoke that—anywhere over the range it was "The City." That meant no place on earth but the gray town, prematurely wrinkled, like a woman in whom youth's excesses too long burned, which huddled on a point of sand, scourged with winds, racked by fogs, scintillant with dust motes in the cold sunshine, where lived the most cheerful people in the world; where now the gayest courage in the world serenely builds.

Old San Francisco was fashioned by the weather and a two-bit piece. The climate forbade the roseate dalliances of youth, moonlight sittings, twilight porches, trysts of summer nights; year-long after sunset the guerilla trades fogs harried the bleak suburbs, routing the dwellers so that they fled to the down-town

and under the arc-lights defied the somber sky. The blatant Pacific drove them to their lubricity; they invented a prodigality of meat, light and music for two-bits that no man might lack cheer, and being a homeless people of brave wit, an ingenious people of mad individualism, dwellers in a town of superlatives, gilding the common with a defying genius, on the optimistic two-bits they reared a method of life artistically unique, hectically materialistic, astonishingly brilliant, and most potently human—which last at once explains Old San Francisco. Nothing was bad to the gray city that offered a pretext for dining; nothing could be good that forbade fellowship. It lived, loved and died in the radiance of its gorgeous, labyrinthine cafés, laughing with its merry mistresses, though the bread be stale, the wine raw and the jewel on her finger a bit of glass. It had no patience with a virtue that would not feast with it, jest with it, forget with it in its curiously child-like amourousness; but with an understanding heart the Ten Laws might have sat with the harlot and been illumined.

Through the sunny morning tide of Kearny Street at ten o'clock, Arnold came to Portsmouth Square near the golden galleon of the Robert Louis Stevenson fountain. He was gently drunk and the air was cool after the night. When he reached Fish Alley among the squawking Chinese vendors, he debated for a time —and went on up the hill; he had forgotten something, or wanted something—he could not remember which.

Miss Granberry was sweeping down the front stairs of her lodgings between the Family Liquor Store front and the lace curtained door of Sedaini's; she paused

a moment in the fresh morning to evade the dust skurry she had raised and looked about. The street was still, save for the children at play in Happy Alley. The old woman went to the lamp-post to beat the dust from the mat, and now discovered her chief lodger half-way up the outside stairs to the balcony.

"Why, good morning, Mr. Hammy!" she cried. "And so you slipped away and were married on the sly! We waited for you the whole evening—Mary and Sammy and that big man from the woods. He was disappointed, for he must go North to-day. How's the bride?"

"Well," said Arnold, in the illogic of liquor. "Everything's all right, Granny—and I want to get in—find a handkerchief."

"Why, your rooms are open," she answered, astonished, and came nearer.

"Of course," retorted he, and retreated upward. She came to sweep the porch. He was fumbling in the litter on his dresser. She blinked at the mud on his patent leathers and on his trousers, much perplexed and wishing to question him, but his mood did not invite.

"The dear heart—the dear heart—" began Miss Granny. "I suppose you kept her at the Palace? You are thinking of a trip, Mr. Hammy?"

"Trip?—O, yes—trip!" He was plunging about among tentative deceits, his dulled brain hopeless of explanation. "It's all right, and don't you worry. And maybe we—won't return to-night, Granny."

And he backed away, warily watching her as she gaped in wonder at him, unguessing his plight. All night he had been about numberless resorts, now

staring vacantly at his companions, now arguing brilliantly on a multitude of matters. With a mutter to the old woman's perplexity he gained the street and then Portsmouth Square, where he paused to see a group of pudgy Chinese infants playing with an abject dog under the acacias. It was the lavender pup from the country-up-in-back, and to him it slunk, dragging a length of ragged rope by which the woodsman had tied it to Granny's balcony.

The drunken man lifted the clumsy brute; he gave a dime to a squat Chinese boy in a head-dress of gilt and pink and with dirty flowered trousers, and another to Yet Kai, the opium pipe mender, senile and toothless, standing by, as a reward for some sort of constructive rescue of the country dog, and then went on, gravely wiping its muddy feet with the clean handkerchief he had found at his rooms.

"Old lad," he murmured, "stick by me. I want you, pup—I need you. Just be square with me, lad, and you'll wear diamonds."

The pup cringed, he was forlorn, friendless, and that was not right this pleasing morning in Ham's eyes. He paid fifteen cents for some meat scraps at Coffee John's and then, after the pup's hurried, furtive-eyed mastication, the adventurers went on. Arnold spent a roving hour on Kearny Street. Being hungry he ate, and remembrance reasserting, he drank deep and often. By noon he had driven the little stings from his brain, the qualms from his stomach, the weariness from his legs. A brimming cheeriness seized him to be out among such rushing people in the sun with no care, and the pup to amuse him. At bar after bar he took the em-

purpled pup from under his coat and set it on the wood and drew a laughing coterie with his recital of the woodman's story—the dog that wouldn't be boiled. But ever, when the crowds had grown and the laughing was at its best, the jester withdrew, mordant and alone, fought his way through the streets alone, fled as one haunted from the revelry he evoked. From the last foray he crossed Lotta's Fountain to the *Chronicle* corner and came on Angelo Polacchi behind a clothes-basket of violets and flanked with chrysanthemums, so that Angelo's Italian eyes shone from a flower bank, for all the world like a manikin in the centerpiece of a rich man's table.

Angelo sold flowers for Pietro Scifoni, whose wagon rumbled in every morning from the San Mateo road; he was always delighted when Arnold appeared, for the young man never failed to hail him fraternally, buy violets, give treble the price, and display to all the curb vendors that Angelo was the protegé of a most great man, a *"politico,"*—yes, surely a great man and rich, for did not Angelo get two-bits for himself, as well as selling Pietro's posies?

Angelo was so buffeted about by sweetness that Arnold could not twig his ear as was customary, but he bought a whole armful of yellow chrysanthemums, rewarded the boys on either side of the favored one as well, hailed Pietro, Giuseppe, Old Soldi, each by name and with inelegant merriment, and then suddenly discovered that a laughing group was about him, and that he had hung a chrysanthemum wreath about his own neck. That was funny and yet—well, it was all right, and he laughed with the joyous morning people.

So Mr. Arnold gained Market Street with distinct self-approval—it was right and logical enough to disturb the flower market; the sun was fine, the day young. He drifted on with his chrysanthemums, and at noon was in the Maplewood café where he made the pup lunch dismally on terrapin, while he went behind the bar to instruct Fergy in compounding a "granite face."

And presently he had a group of cronies about him, Mannie Murasky and Louis Ferreri and a prize-fight promoter with a Sonoreno bull-fighter in tow, and others, all chaffing and laughing—young men in the democracy of the street, from a newsboy tipster of the races to Watt Chatom, son of the railroad attorney, who had, that morning, charged in from his great wheat ranches of the San Joaquin in his ninety-horse-power car, mud-covered, cursing the roads and boasting alternately of his racing stud and his drubbing of a recalcitrant ditch-tender on his Tuolumne irrigation canals.

"Hello, J. Ham!" shouted the rich man's son, flushed from heavy eating and drinking and the night's riding through the keen hill air. "Hear you've struck money again. Well, here's another good thing fattening up at the track—" he looked about and pulled Arnold aside, "Corsair—let me put you right."

And though feverish youths hung about crazy to hear this racing talk from two men who were "close" to the wise people, Watt Chatom and Arnold separated with a knowing laugh. Mannie meantime had gathered a retinue which all day ate and drank at Arnold's expense, worthless young men whom Ham did not know

by name, but who knew him and felt now a cocky importance to be treated by Ham Arnold, the notorious, who even yesterday had had his name in the papers as the defiant forefront figure of all the blaze of evil life that encompassed the city, who stood forth to all the Street as the symbol of the after-midnight, its jester and its jest.

At six o'clock Louis Ferreri descended from his machine on Market Street and found them before the Richelieu, Mannie clamorous to dine at Marchand's. He knew a ten-twent'-thirt' vaudeville actress who was to be there to-night and was anxious that she should see him traveling with a spender like J. Ham Arnold. But Ferreri took the host aside.

"Shake that bunch," he cautioned. "What's the matter with you? Whe.e's the girl?"

Arnold smiled in high serenity. "Never mind. You'll have to loosen if you travel with me. Let's kick into Marchand's and see that looker that Mannie is touting so strong."

But Louis protested. No girls for him—no, sir! Once at the Woodmans' picnic at San Jose he had a topaz ring and he met a girl, and—well, no more girls for Louis! It was all right for J. Ham Arnold. Ham could stroll into a café. nod to the house, sing a snatch of *The Rosary,* or *Always,* and drift on down the line. There was nothing for him to pay nor a crook to rob him, the girls looking back at him—but Louis?

Well, once he had a topaz ring—

Arnold split the argument—they would dine at Sanguinetti's, for h. wanted a place where the pup would be *de riguer.* That was the word he used, and Mannie,

impressed, yielded. Anything J. Ham said—and a cup of coffee. Sure, Ham was right. They would go down to Steve's and have whatever it was Ham mentioned in French.

So, with the dog, now befuddled under a chrysanthemum wreath, they went the way to the water front. Then Arnold saw Sammy Jarbo on a car and must needs stop the cavalcade to hail him, get him off and add him to the party. Sammy was astounded, but his protests were drowned in gabble, as Mannie led the way importantly into all the saloons to Davis Street, climbing on the bar-step with an important flourish to the loungers. "What 'cha havin'? Aw—White Rock—aw, be a sport. Aw, come on—rum an' gum—sure, rum an' gum!"

And he would protest when Louis stuck to mineral water and Sammy to ginger ale. Arnold drank anything now; he had got the pinwheels out of his brain, and had forgotten something, he said, and felt all right, and *was* all right, and so rounded out the achievement with many libations.

At Steve Sanguinetti's, famous for its cheap conviviality, given over to clerks, fishers, sea mates, students, shoddy Bohemians, shop-girls and gaping tourists who heard of Steve's at the hotels, the quartet found a table and at once attracted attention. Arnold bought a red balloon of a fakir, tied it to the pup's tail and set him forth as a centerpiece. At once the abashed pup had the stage. With shrieks of delight the diners rose, and from all points of the sawdusted floor brought their chairs, jammed the small tables together, and, as Mannie said, "made it a party." In vain the

one-eyed proprietor objected. He was hustled off behind his bar, bombarded with French bread, threatened with a syphon soda bath by a girl in a window, and so threw up his hands in despair.

Ferreri was in a panic—he had on the forget-me-not pin, which had no safety catch, and here he was surrounded by girls who slapped his back and scalded his knees with coffee as he tried to watch all points of danger. Mannie gurgled with joy; it was what he called a "bird of a time," and despite jeers and catcalls, he was master of ceremonies, calling for more red wine and denouncing the *raviolis*. Arnold was talking foot-ball with a trio of university juniors, who had "caught" a like number of Oakland shop-girls and "chased them over to the city to eat at Steve's." Every girl about the bay knew that this meant not to wear your best clothes, and to laugh when strangers at adjoining tables called you "kid" or "dearie." Steve's was perfectly harmless, but then you mustn't mind!

Out of this laughing orgy of youth and good digestion Arnold suddenly broke away—a girlishly bright face near him, it seemed, had curiously caught him. The others saw him staring at her, and then he left, paying for thirty-two dinners at fifty cents each and giving ten dollars to the musicians and the waiters. And he would not talk as he stumbled to a car.

"What's the matter, Hammy?" asked the poet anxiously. "You never got so wild as this. What's happened? Come on home."

"Home? Little man, you run along and make a

nice poem about home and the stars—and love. And leave me alone."

But the poet clung to him. "No, you've done enough to-night. And brace up for that little girl."

A smile came to Ham's gray, weary face. "Just a dream—and I'm killing it. It whirls and whirls, but I'm strangling it. Here—" He held forth a long envelope in which was the silken case containing Sylvia's ten thousand dollars. "Mail it—Trinity County. Find box, Sammy—mail it."

Sammy's eyes bulged at sight of the bills' edges. "O, what's the matter? You'll have to register it."

"Register?" Arnold's thick voice raised. "All right—to-morrer." He stumbled past the other. "And that'll end it. And you can make your nice little poem—home and love and my soul—and God, who never cares nor answers!"

Mannie and Louis joined them, Mr. Murasky with a new idea. The night was still young—they would go to the Tivoli. Nobody'd care at the old free-hearted Tivoli—they could have whatever it was Ham mentioned in French about the pup. Yes, sir, to the Tivoli and hear Tetrazzini and the dago bunch sing, and Paul Steindorf's orchestra. No grand opera for Mannie, but a mutt told him to go look over the chorus—a dame, third from the right, first row. But when this scheme was broached in the car, Arnold holding to his chrysanthemum-enwreathed pup, with the red balloon floating from its tail up among the car straps, mutiny seized his henchmen. Ferreri wouldn't go to the grand opera. Thunder—no! Mannie was crazy in the head! Wouldn't they be a scrab-

galagus party for the opera—Ham and his pup and the balloon and chrysanthemums? Everybody knew him—the orchestra leader and the tuba player and a lot of guys. No, sir—no opera!

But Mannie got twenty dollars from Ham and squirmed off through the crowd. Outgeneraled, the muddle-headed slot-machine man still protested. Go to the opera with a fool dog and a balloon? They would get pinched, that's what would happen, and the bunch down the line would get hold of it and *he'd* never hear the last of it, and it would hurt business. Maybe it was all right for J. Ham Arnold; he was wont to set the Street laughing; and to go on a little toot was all right—but cut out the grand opera.

But Mr. Arnold decided that he was tired and wanted to sit down, and an opera was as good as any place to sit down in. So, still croaking evil, the slot-machine man saw them disappear through the vestibule, Ham hiding the pup under his coat and Mannie juggling the balloon behind a woman's hat, until the trio was presently in a stage box. But in the lights the poet was seized with misgivings. Suppose that fool pup barked? And that red balloon? He urged Mannie to give him the thing, but the little Hebrew, sniggering until his yellow diamond was a coruscation of light, reduced to a regurgitative smother of laughter, refused. And then the overture was quelled, the curtain shot up, and Rudolph and Marcel were blowing their fingers in the Parisian attic, for it was *La Boheme.*

"Questo mar rosso—mi ammollisce," narrated the baritone.

"Look at th' pup," whispered Mr. Murasky.

"Che fai? . . . Nei cieli bigi guardo," answered Rudolph.

"Look at his nose," continued Mr. Murasky. "Kee-hee—"

"L'amore e un caminetto che—"

"e in fretta!" bawled the baritone.

"Look at—"

"Say, Mannie—" Arnold stirred, the pup rose to shake himself, and the ladies in the adjoining box took notice—"if you don't keep still I'll throw him into that big horn. Now—"

"You're drunk," gasped Mr. Murasky, chortling with suppressed glee.

"I'm drunk, but I'll get over it. You're a damn fool, and you never will get over it."

"Ma intanto qui si gela—" quavered Rudolph, but his eye was on the front row, which craned about furtively at Mr. Arnold's box-party.

"O, Ham!" whispered the affrighted poet, "don't talk so loud!"

Mannie Murasky suddenly straightened, with a countenance blankly alarmed. "Where is it? Who's got it?"

"Got what?"

"A te l'atto primo!" warbled the tenor, his eye now on the pup.

"Ga's sake!" whispered the Headlight Kid, "duke it—catch it!"

Under the edge of the poet's chair the red balloon was balancing. The trio watched it; the poet breathlessly over his shoulder, Mannie hypnotized by appre-

hensions, and J. Ham Arnold philosophically interested.

"Grab it!" gurgled Mannie.

The poet put down his little finger and pushed the balloon back under his chair. .. bobbed to the other edge, gyrating maddeningly. The women in the next box looked at it entranced; the tuba player gaped; the front orchestra row craned; Marcel and Rudolph blinked over the footlights.

"Don't wiggle," chattered Mr. Murasky; "don't move—O!"

Pop-eyed, staring frightfully ahead, sat the poet.

"My goodness!" exclaimed an indignant one in the adjoining box, "it's awful!"

Mr. Arnold uprose and bowed to her with resigned, solicitous patience:

"It is—it is distinctly the worst yet!"

Injuredly gathering up the blue pup, with its trailing festoon of autumn flowers, the box-party host departed. Mannie turned, but dared not follow. Between him and the exit the balloon titillated under the chair's edge; a breath would start it toward the proscenium.

And, staring straight before him, listening to the two Bohemians cackling of their woes, sat the laundry wagon poet. He was cold as ice; his feet tickled with terror. It was worse than being stuck on the forty-ninth stanza of *Pizarro's Quest*. Then the portières parted; Mr. Murasky *had* flown.

"Pres-to!" squealed the baritone.

The poet prayed for an earthquake.

CHAPTER VI

At nine o'clock Arnold descended from a boot-black's stand on Grant Avenue, inspected his shoes critically, and turned down this street of fakirs. He gave himself a comforting conceit that his senses still broke subconsciously through the tide of his drunkenness, that he could see tolerantly above the chaos that charged him now and then. He went along Grant Avenue, carrying the dog under his arm with lordly complacence.

This curious place was packed throughout its four short blocks—a forum set aside by unwritten law to the evangelist, the agitator, the fakir, the proclaimers of revolutions—the unwashed, unclean, the ebullience of the defeated, the querulous individualism of this town of hates, of humors, abortive demagoguery, obscure genius and turgid idealism—here its mordant soul of discontent rose to question and to defy. Never such a town of charlatanism so lavishly supported and incredulously jeered; palmists, astrologers, clairvoyants, seers and prophets flourished as the native bays, and on Grant Avenue, now before Arnold's eye, the blatant life, the staccato under-voice of the city found expression.

At one end of the asphalted forum a Socialist agitator stormed at artisans, complacent from being the highest paid workers in the world; near him the band

of the Salvation Army beat the cadence to Heaven; then an old man, unknown, unheeded, lost in the throng, quavered a silly discourse on free love, next to a Jew bawling the merits of a magnetic cure-all ring; and a faded woman distributing pamphlets forecasting the end of the world, a decrepit Egyptologist, with a patriarch's beard, lecturing on the lost scarabæus of Khem, were shouldered by a broken-down pugilist, who was selling tips on to-morrow's races; while beyond, in the end of a cart beneath a choking gas torch, a quack doctor, in top hat and silk waistcoat, pompous and strident-voiced, pointed to his red anatomical charts, gaping skull segments, dismembered limbs, gruesome, diseased viscera, ghastly under the sinuous light.

But beyond these, the smaller groups unattached and disintegrating about the lesser orators, the disputative curb philosophers, none lacking hearing, Arnold's eye caught an unusual figure. Over the packed throng, lit by a flaring torch above the rostrum on which she stood, was a woman in the black, loose robe of an academician, the mortar-board cap surmounting a face, young, strong, Romanesque; a Diana grace in the arm's gesture. Over the ragged men, the homeless idlers, the fools and shamblers, the filled and complacent, the hungry and absorbed, the street dreamers and idealists, the banal and corrupt, she towered as vivid in the night's flare against the dark as a Rembrandt study.

The young man stopped before the dominance of her voice. Above the shuffle of the street, clear, sonorous, it leaped far over the yap and clamor; it held him

as did the figure poised, the face compelling imperiously. Always his secret love of the theatric moved him; now he staggered on and a phrase came to him out of a climacteric period.

She was preaching of a mystic Christ, a symbolic interpretation of all revelations and messages of God, the superimposition of a modern esthete on the ancient prophecies, an oriental concept of the fervent faith that had led the western races. The soul of the world slept, she said, because men were engrossed with the earth, lacked vision; they turned away from the inner light, for within each was the power to redeem. Society was evil, a city corrupt, an era debased because men sank the real beneath the apparent. There was no sin, suffering, death; the soul was incorruptible, but it slept unexalted. Within each lay the power to pass complete, serene, unmoved through all existences; and the Christ she taught was a mystic teacher, high, detached, Nirvanic, as a disk of pale gold against silver.

In the street they listened, they whose Christ had been a Man of Sorrows, gone down to death hot with passion for the common love of the fallen and the failed, who had passed along the dusty roadside unbefriended; they listened to this modern concept, this denial of sin and agonizing, of a God to aid, or the need of aid, to this symbolic Christ beckoning them to await absorption back to the eternal and the infinite; before her astonishing appeal, her wondrous voice, they stood—but no man came.

Arnold, the drunken wanderer, elbowed through the throng until he was by the platform. He lurched to

it until the torch flared higher, and with a shift of the black robe she turned her face to him. For an instant he fought back the delirium to look at her, her eyes widening, her lips parting startled as by an accusing revelation. And it seemed to him that she stood a meaningless symbol, high, detached, with empty hands above the outcasts, as though they waited for some great message and she had none—nothing, a fool's talk, a scientific formula as senseless as the gibber of any priest to their needs. And, staring at her for a while, he reeled through the press of faces to turn with a cry: "Who cares? Who answers? You're sleeping, too! You've failed!"

She saw his glance at the sensuous completeness of her body as he made way, the crowd cursing him in mutters, to the curb. Then, with a curiously mechanical falter, as in a dream, she saw him go again to the Oriental saloon.

Arnold paused by the bar, steadying himself against his sickness, his dimming brain; then he groped to the rear of the establishment and staggered into one of the boxes, a square apartment hung with heavy Turkish weaves and gold-threaded tapestries. Here, under the half shadows and uncertain glows from a lantern of perforated bronze, which hung over the table, he fell on the cushioned wall seat. A mulatto attendant, in fez and jacket of oriental figure, looked in at the man leaning his head on the table, showed his gleaming teeth in a familiar, friendly smile and departed. The air of the place was warm, voluptuous with liquor and tobacco smells and the drugging exhalations of the voluminous, tawdry hangings. At this early hour

none was in the labyrinthine rear establishment of the Oriental. From the bar-room a musical device, with a chiming, fairy-like tinkle, gave forth a tremulous pianissimo movement from the *Song to the Evening Star*.

The mulatto in the red fez was holding a whispered conference at the end of the corridor; a woman's voice questioned, and then she came along the passage.

The man in the box heard the rustle of her silken gown, the parting of the portières, her friendly little laugh. He raised his heavy head to greet Nella Free.

From her came a barbaric suggestion of perfumes, silks, jewels, an elegant coiffure, apt to her setting—she was beautiful in the semi-purple shadows of the corridor. One white hand was on the Turkish hangings, the other held back the marten fur collar from her bosom.

"Andy said you were here—and needed your friends," she laughed. "What's the matter, Ham? Who did *this* to you? I'm surprised!"

He looked at her steadily, silently, while the trilling melody of the Tannhäuser song came softly from the front. She shrugged her shoulders with another constrained little laugh, and seated herself opposite him. The attendant appeared with a tray on which tinkled two iced glasses of a pellucid green liquor.

"Sallie and I just dropped in while it's quiet," Miss Free remarked. "You know I daren't go round town very much. I ordered the creme de minthe for us—but you—"

He motioned the waiter away and turned to watch her gravely, again master of his dimming senses. She

twitched nervously under his eyes; she rubbed her red lips with a bit of lace and started to rally him, but he interrupted with a moody impatience.

"How long has Stillman been keeping you?"

She tossed her chin petulantly.

"I told you once—everything."

His directness hurt her.

"He'll never marry you."

She twisted about in the seat. "Well," she laughed, a hand on her side, "he's had plenty of time to make good! But it's all in a lifetime."

"Yes—five years now, isn't it?"

"I met him when I was a candy-store girl in Oakland—I was sixteen. Harry's been good to me ever since."

"Just a little girl—and life smashed in on you."

She laughed in deprecation. "See here—what's the matter with you? I kept my mother well off until she died, and I'm keeping my little sister in Notre Dame. I'd rather be there, Hammy, than to be one of these shop-girls. Did you ever ask any of your millionaire friends who run the big stores and support the churches how a girl can live on four dollars a week?"

"Some day, Nel, he'll quit you—and then—then—"

"I'll be old and ugly, eh?" she retorted sharply. "Well, so'll the other girls. And then dead, eh? Well, so'll the *good* girls."

The man raised his head, fighting the grim tide drowning his brain.

"Your soul's asleep," he muttered; "soul's asleep!"

"Who cares?" she answered, with her idle laugh. "It's all in a lifetime! Who cares?"

"God cares." He looked at her; her blue eyes widened in a sort of fear. "God cares," he muttered, "and I'm going back somehow—some way."

She sat staring at him, the tinkling note of the star song in their ears, silent in the drugged air of the Turkish room.

"What's the matter with you?" she said at last, her nervous laugh following. "*God?* And going *back?* Hammy, you're awful drunk. I'll call the machine and send you to the baths. You're crazy."

A man came laughing along the passage; Eddie Ledyard stood before them.

"Some one said you needed looking after, Ham," he cried. "Nel, what's on him, to do this?"

Arnold folded his arms, his body swaying, and looked benignly on them.

"You two," he muttered, "going to love each other, eh? Now, don't. Love's a bad joke, Nel; so bad that I can't laugh at it any more."

The flush of the girl's blood mounted through her rouge. Eddie laughed confusedly. "Jolly along," he evaded. "Must have made a killing! And who's going to win the Narcissus stakes? Watt Chatom's filly?"

"Bianca," murmured Arnold sententiously, drawn from his stupor.

"Bianca!" cried the girl. "That's what I heard, too —on the dead!"

Ledyard started—they should know, these two—they were in with the inside crowd at the track. "Sure? You sure it's Bianca, Ham?"

Arnold nodded cunningly and unsteadily transferred

the dolorous pup from one pocket to another, holding its forefeet in the crook of his arm. "Bianca," he affirmed sleepily, and waved them away. "I'm close to the wise talk—Bianca."

Another step had come along the corridor; a powerfully built young man, with a red face and blue German eyes, looked into the box with a nervous laugh.

"What's this I hear?" he demanded. "Ham, they told me to look you up!"

Hammy looked with superior benevolence on the legislator. "Fred, I'm all right—no crook's going to strong-arm *me*. I've come back—s'where I belong."

Fred Weldy's startled laugh echoed; he stared at the others.

"Take care of him," Nella whispered. "There was a girl he was going to marry. And she must have thrown him down—Hammy, a lad who's good to every woman! You'd better take care of him."

Arnold put his hand paternally on Weldy's shoulder, as always he had done since their high-school days, though the job printer was his own age.

"Son," he began impressively, "I'm close up and you aren't. I put you in politics, didn't I, Fred? I made you."

The legislator started, laughed feebly. Ham was indeed drunk, thought he, for boasting was the last thing in him.

"Come on home, Hammy," he urged. "I just ran down from the capital to see you. I've been reading all this stuff in the papers—and I had to see you—"

"To-morrow," returned his political godfather, with

dignity. "To-night I'm merely getting the right
spective of some things. And don't mind the pape
no grand jury crooks on earth can get *me*. I di
save you, Fred—merely program—program—joke
the *people* made an' provided."

Eddie Ledyard, to whom politics was a closed b
was staring. Nella Free shrugged her shoulders,
a warning to the one "close up." But he went
"Afraid? Afraid of this town? What is it? A r
I can kick it and it squeals—and what can it do?"
touched the statesman's arm imperially. "I'm put
you wise—when you're close to the big men and
big money, nothing can touch you—nothing! I
here—we put you in the legislature to kill this inv
gation of what killed the anti-racing bills—now,
know where you get off, don't you?"

The legislator laughed deprecatingly; his manl
writhed. "Be still, old man; you're drunk!
you're a marked man now, with all these stories
and all the preachers and unions and farmers how
to know what killed the racing bills. 'God's sake,
went on pathetically, "and all the crooks and li
men in the state hounding us the other way. I
down to talk to you, Ham, and you're drunk!"

"Perspective," murmured the other. "Want to
off and see things different—merely so. I'm croo
—I know that; you're crooked—you know that; w
all crooked—we all know that; but let's get a
from pretense and tell one another so. What's
gag the preachers spring? They stand up and
God *we're* all sinners; but they daren't tell that to
big money behind. Their souls are asleep, too

could go preach on the avenue to-night—I feel religious. Here's you that's crooked, here's me that's crooked, here's all of us that's crooked—and yet I think God cares."

They looked on the drunken fool, and after a bit, fighting his delirium, he lurched through the doorway. Weldy watched him long, and then went after him, but he had gained the street, lost in the throng.

In the stuffy little box the clerk looked anxiously at Nella across the table. "God cares!" he echoed, with a laugh. "O, what's got into him?"

"If some one cared it'd be different with a lot of us," she answered. "We'd be different if just some one cared."

The boyish clerk tried to take her hand across the table; he went on with eagerness: "Yes, you'd be different if some one cared—and if you cared for some one. You can't fool me, Nel. I told you once how much I cared—"

She checked him with a laugh; she tapped him playfully with the rubber tube of the Turkish pipe on the table. "Here, now, stop, Eddie. Haven't you a mother—and everybody? I promised Hammy I wouldn't let you talk like this. And besides," she hurried on, "you couldn't stand the pace a little bit. My bills last month were three hundred dollars for just clothes!"

"If you loved," he burst out with the fine chivalry of twenty-one, "clothes wouldn't matter—not if you cared!"

Nella laughed, choking a tremor from her voice, reaching for the evening paper on the table. "Now,

Kid, let's just be friends. Here," she added to
her trouble "the Narcissus entries are out. Ed
Ham said Bianca. Let's just be friends—and you
play fifty for me at Corbett's. Come; we're
friends, and we'll back Bianca!"

CHAPTER VII

At midnight the westerly fogs streamed across the city, the cold wind searched the streets. From the squat markets of the water front the wanderer came alone. He was uncertain of the corner, trembling with the chill and reaction; he was beginning to remember, and he wished to forget. But as he started, something moved across his shoes. Scared, wet, hungry, dragging a frayed rope in which was twisted a single scuffed chrysanthemum, the country dog crept to his feet. In and out of drink shops, the splendid places that boasted that for fifty years they had not closed their doors, day or night; the gin joints of Chinatown, the Italian wine rooms hewed out of the hill rock, the Japanese resorts, where sloe-eyed little women fed the master hot rice wine, the brute had followed. Now he picked it from the slime, wiped its feet and tucked it from the fog beneath his coat so that its nose, with a dreary snuffle, lay by his ear.

"Cold, pup?" the man muttered. "Neve' mind, pal; you stand by me and be square. Jus' follow me, Kid, and be square." So, stilling its racking shivers on his breast, he went into the darkness.

He was before the garish portal of a Barbary Coast dance-hall an hour later. The narrow, cobbled way shone with the arcs each direction, a mile from Kearny to the bay, and all along came the blare of bands

from basement after basement dance-hall, so m
and so close-packed that the crash of reed and bra
from thousands of instruments became an inharmo
riot without form, without time; and as the red gl
of the street made it a gaping wound in the dark qu
ter, so over it hovered this insane ensemble, the soul
music maddened.

Arnold watched the stream in and out of the fam
places of the Coast. Sailors, soldiers, recruits a
time-expired, cattlemen and miners, salmon pack
and Sierra shepherds, broken adventurers from all t
south, and with these, sight-seeing women touris
guided by police, flashy youths over from the tow
patrolmen and plain-clothes men, made up the afte
midnight tide. Within the halls the same pagean
laughter, hurrying, shouts, quarrels—his impassi
eye rested on it with curious interest, for it was f
removed from the night aristocracy he knew dow
town.

He was at The Welcome, when a dozen soldie
crowded the entrance of the dance-hall, noisily baw
ing to others in the street. The ever-ready patr
wagon had dashed by.

"Mexican cut a girl at the Firefly," muttered
hanger-on, "and a tough whaler cleaned out Cowbo
Mag's." But none would go to see—it was merel
the prelude to the night's police court harvest. But a
two o'clock the pace quickened. Arnold, recovere
from his stupor, had begun drinking again, spendin
money sensationally free from hall to hall; he soo
had a following mostly of riotous soldiers "gon
broke" and hailing him as blood brother.

"M' son-of-a-gun," murmured a yellow-striped corporal. "Ol' Sec' Cavalry—s'wat he is. Sure! Santa Isabel—Pilar del Rio—*Rosario*—whole bunch of fights s'ze was in."

"Ev' hear of Inky Idgetts?" broke in another. "Troop guide—hel've fine bucky—Idgetts—Third Squadron. Me an' him—"

Against his crowding confrères Arnold waved the pup: "Sure—sure. Ol' Sec' Cavalry—sure!"

"This yere Idgetts—"

"I bane know him—"

A huge and hairy sailor pushed into the martial group. His blue eyes and pink face turned from one to another in great good nature.

"Idgetts—me an' him—"

"I bane know him, too—"

"O, Scandinavia, forget it!" murmured the corporal, softly. *"Blow!"*

A yellow-haired girl clung to the sailor's arm. "O, come, you Babe; don' mix!" she pleaded, and tried to draw him from them.

"This yere Idgetts—they *lin-cheed* him—"

"By Valdez I coom—"

The narrator of Idgetts' exploits turned on the Swede. "Now, hit the grit! I'm tellin' of this yere bucky. They sliced 'im—"

But the Viking thrust beaming among them: "I coom by Valdez—"

And then, as the blonde girl clung to his huge arm wailing: "Aw, don' start nothin'! Aw, come, you honey!" a fist shot over her shoulder at the seaman's ear. He fell back, looking with amazed infantile

injury about him, and then, propelled by some hu
catapult behind, for what reason and by whom
never be known, the celebrant of the Idgetts epic
suddenly doubled up and into the Northman's stom
And at once the place was a whirling fight. Int
plunged a trio of bouncers and floor managers.
proprietor himself, a former light-weight pugilist,
barrel fat, bobbed about, panting in the press, a
on troubled waters. The swaying battle jammed
door, the white windows fell with a snarl of break
glass and the combatants went to the street, with
police leaping on the flanks like ready dogs.

Arnold was in the thick, dodging, laughing; he
an officer's club raised above the girl, who still clu
screaming to the seaman's sleeve.

"Barret, cut that!" His hand went about the poli
man's wrist. The other jerked free and whirled
lighter antagonist against the broken door. "You w
will you?" he roared. "Le' go that club!"

"O, quit," murmured Mr. Arnold. "Don't be fo
ish—you know *me*."

"No, I don't! Don't gi' me any lip!" The offi
forced him through the thickening crowd. The fig
had stopped with surprising suddenness. About t
prisoners seized at random the police listened dryly
the gabble, wiping their perspiring heads. T
wheezing proprietor, so short of stature that nothi
but his round post of a head was seen, cursed the s
diers and onlookers, who jeered him and the danc
hall women in the wrecked front of The Welcom
And, towering above all, the great Swede looked wi
round-faced, babyish perplexity at them and the patr

racing under the white arcs a block away. The girl saw the oncoming wagon.

"Ga' sake," she wailed, "if I get pinched! O, if I get pinched! George—" she appealed to the proprietor—"tell 'em I wasn't doin' nothin'!"

"I don't want youse in my place at all if you ain't a lady. I won't stand for you if youse ain't a *perfect* lady."

"Cut out the bull," murmured a policeman wearily. "They'll all go."

Arnold turned to him. "See here, you can't ride me!"

"Dry up!" the officer retorted. "Here, climb in the wagon!"

The prisoner's eye was on the patrol van backing to the curb. He turned with a menace on the officer. "Say, sport, I'm Jack Arnold. You ride me and I'll break you. Just ask Harry Stillman or the chief about me—"

"Tumble in," replied the patrolman; "sing it to the birdies."

And, staring at the wagon, with a sudden laugh, Arnold got in.

The plunging van with the Swede, the dance girl and the querulous historian of Trooper Idgetts, whirled through the glare of Pacific Street to the hall of justice, leaving at The Welcome, on the bar, surrounded by pools of beer that stuck to its feet in unpleasing puckers, wearing dismally a frayed chrysanthemum in its rag rope collar, the lavender pup from the country-up-in-back.

The dance-hall girl wailed in the jogging van:

"Aw, Jo'll kill me—I never been pinched—Jo'll
me!"

Arnold came to her, a hand on her arm. "N
don't go on so, sister. I'll see you through this."

She turned savagely on him. "Aw, you c'n ta
You come down the street in yer good clothes
money—and to-morrow it's all right. But w
chance's a girl got? Just tell me what's right ab
it?"

The young man sat back in the shadows of the v
He watched her, and then, when they descended,
said quietly: "Kid, I'm sorry. I'll see you throu
it all."

But she snarled at him, though before the desk s
geant in the basement office, he watched her unmov
in a sort of dream.

The idling officers gave them a casual inspectio
Beyond, a tall woman in black was identifying so
stolen trinkets at a desk, and the book-sergeant did n
look up for a moment.

"Shinanigan at George's," laconically began t
complaining officer. "Girl and this Swede jumped
soldier who wouldn't stand percentage and Cros
tried to put 'em out. And this fellow," indicatin
Arnold, "tried to swing on me."

The heavy-jowled sergeant grunted and turned
the arrest book.

"Name?"

"I coom by Valdez," said the sailorman. "Captai
Nelson, he tole me—"

"Name!" roared the sergeant, and the arrestin
officer said: "Ole Oleson—that'll do for *him*."

The desk man scratched stolidly; then turned to the soldier. "Name?"

"My name's Franzie—H. Franzie. Hell, I wasn't doin' nothin'! I was just tellin' of this yere Idgetts—"

"Name?" thundered the sergeant to the dance-hall girl, who wept, clinging to the rail.

"I was just trying to keep 'em from fighting. George'll tell you. I'm Maude Cummins. Oh, Jo'll kill me—"

"Take 'em up," growled the bulbous-headed one. His heavy eyes wandered with sleepy malice to Arnold. He sat back, putting down the pen, and took up his dead cigar. The well-dressed prisoner had stood nonchalantly apart, watching the matter.

"Say, Jack, can't you raise enough deviltry in Ellis Street without comin' over here. Gotta bank roll, hey, and gotta spend it?"

An idling patrolman laughed. "Was it *Hermoine* in the Sixth?" he put in, and Jack Arnold smiled placidly.

The arresting officer looked his discomfiture. He had "made a break" then, had he? He was new on the force and met many "drags" that perplexed him. Concealing his chagrin he drove the other prisoners to the door. But the girl clung to the rail, turning on Arnold with a scream of rage.

"You know! Tell 'em I wasn't doing anything. Here you get off—you're some damned politician—some sure-thing man *strong* with the office—"

"Shut that!" bellowed the sergeant.

"Naw, you wouldn't do a thing to him, wouldja? Him with his good clothes an' his pull—"

"Redmond," began Arnold, "she's right. Georg just wanted to give her the run—and she wasn't d ing a thing."

"She can tell that to the judge to-morrow. Up!"

The girl shrieked as they forced her to the doo The tall woman in black turned a troubled face, b they did not see her. Arnold stood, his face darklin the liquor craze driven for a time from his brain.

"Look here," he said, "that girl's right—she wa trying to stop the row."

"Don't go tellin' me my business," the desk sergean blustered.

Arnold swung before him. "Yes, damn you, yo run that girl in for nothing, but you don't do a thin to me!"

"Get out of here!" snarled the sergeant.

"Yes, I'm let off. I've got a drag, haven't I? I'm strong higher up, ain't I? That poor devil of a sailo will get ten days and lose his ship and wages, and tha lad from the cavalry will be cinched at camp, and tha weak-minded girl will be robbed by the bond sharks and the judge'll wink at it. O, it's great to be an American! It's a fine old graft—and to hell with the crooks like you!"

The sergeant was dumb with astonishment—his lit- tle pig eyes rolled bewilderedly between the oily fat of his cheeks. Then dismay gave place to wrath. "Get out of here!" he roared. "Take him home—he's *drunk!*"

Arnold shook his fist at the brass buttons. "Send me up! Go on, you crook! Afraid of me, aren't you? O, it's a great thing to be an American!"

"Git!" howled the sergeant, and a laughing patrolman slipped an arm about John Arnold and led him away. On the broad steps he freed the belligerent. "Pull out, Jack. Old Redmond will jug you if you roast him—it's fierce. Now get home, boy!"

The young man leaned against a polished pillar of the hall of justice and looked across the dark spread of Portsmouth Square. His dimming senses rose to note the fantastic roofs of Chinatown, a dragon flag limp in the promised morning. Still and sleeping the city lay. He stretched an arm to it. "What's right in it all? What's right?"

The stars beyond the dragon flag rocked; intent with his sickness, he did not hear the door open, the woman come out. Seeing the man she stopped, and then he slowly turned with a dull glance at her, the preacher of the mystic Christ in the street of fakirs.

"It's you," he muttered, "and you've failed, too. You're way above it all—you've given nothing to us all—you've failed, too."

She was silent before his insolence. The light on her face from the electrolier recalled a flickering remembrance of his student days—a medallion he had seen, a Minerva head. The woman had a face as pure, as unmoved as that classic profile. He turned from her with a growl. "I'm going back. I want it right."

And then stepping clear of the column's base, he pitched headlong to the pavement. She hurried after him, kneeled, turning his face to the light. Blood splashed her gloves. A cabman came from the all-night stand across the street.

"Bad tumble," he said, bending over. "It's Jac
Arnold!"

"We'd better get him to the hospital." She wipe
the blood from his head.

The driver hesitated. "Mebbe not. He's not hu
much and he's pretty well known—I'd hate to mi
him at the 'mergency. He lives jus' up the hill."

"Well, home, then. Bring your cab across."

They got the senseless man into it with difficulty
The woman held him on the cushions as the vehicl
whirled through Chinatown. Once he struggled t
consciousness. "Le' me explain—He cares—*H*
cares—"

"Be still!" she whispered and held him closer in he
strong arms. It seemed a stealthy joy had come, th
outpouring of a maternal softness as a glow in th
white stillness of her soul's way, she who had move
alone and with empty hands.

At the curb below his rooms they lifted him to his
unsteady feet, feeling of her handkerchief bound abou
his head. While the driver took him up the stairs she
searched for his hat in the carriage. She found some-
thing else—a dirty package, a sort of silken case,
bulging with money. She looked out at the drunken
man, at the driver assisting him with commiserating
jests; with a frowning thought, a hesitance, she placed
the packet in her bodice.

The cabman returned. "He can get in all right—
says he mustn't wake up Granny!" He laughed.
"And he says to thank the lady!"

"You know him"—she said calmly—"very well?"

"Everybody knows him. A lad round town—one

On this the day came—a thief, a perjurer and an outcast. *Page 135.*

of the race-track crowd. But square"—she was tendering him money—"no, not from you. I'll take you home. They call you the Christ Crier down-town, don't they? And we ought to help sinners." He laughed. "We all know you," the driver muttered. "They turn to watch you—your grand voice."

She smiled wearily. All the town knew her as the Street knows its pageantry—no more. And so, across the abyss dividing her pale Christ from the red shores of life, she knew the world—no more. Untouched, listening curiously to the agony beyond the gulf, she had moved alone, complacent, soul sufficient.

Arnold felt along the balcony rail to his door. The clock in the hall of justice struck five. He looked on the city lights, on the ocean fog above. Then the lights became comets, the clouds, whirling bands—he fell squarely, as one stricken by death, on the mat before his door.

After half an hour his fingers moved along the mat, finding some substance which they carried to his lips. The dead fragrance of the violets—her violets, scattered over him on another dawn as he lay here, her guardian knight, were on his lips, but he did not know.

Presently, rap-a-tap, dragging a rag rope out of the slime of the streets, a homeless dog crept up the stairs. He whined miserably, and then slunk on to crawl upon the master's breast and, sheltered, sleep. On this the day came and then the sun shone—a thief, a perjurer and an outcast, senseless in the blood and flowers on the hilltop.

CHAPTER VIII

"There's a good deal to poetry," continued M
Jarbo, dining with Mannie Murasky at Sedaini's, "b
sides getting the words to match at the ends of you
lines. Technique's a big thing, but then you've got t
look out for the poetic principle. Many a good lad
had to quit the business and go unhonored down th
corridors of Time because he was a shine when it cam
to handling the poetic principle."

Mr. Murasky, uncertain but disputatious, continue
to polish a loaf of Italian bread across his sleeve
sparring mentally for what he termed a "come-back."

The poet moved far from Mannie's sphere; he wa
a fellow always dumbstruck by a pretty face or good
things to eat, and an alliterative line or a felicitous
measure, suggesting to his vague conceits the great
thing he should sometime do, would play the devil
with a whole day's work for him.

"Never neglect the poetic principle," the versifier
continued to admonish, "and if a man ever wants to
land the big stuff he's got to look out for technique.
Poe was strong on technique—if he'd have cut the
booze—"

"Poe, nothin'," put in Mannie loftily. "If he'd ever
hit th' street alongside of J. Ham Arnold he'd been
nothin' but a trail of smoke in th' distance. How's
Ham feelin' this morning?"

John Hamilton Arnold was, indeed, Mannie's secret examplar. He would like to have idled about the town in that fashion, being seen fashionably dressed on sunny afternoons along Market Street in debonair chaffing with the politicians, the sporting writers and race-track men.

He now looked on the downfall of his patron with mixed feelings, proud to have it said that he and J. Ham were on a "toot" together, but what indeed had happened?

No one knew—none questioned the prodigal, though about his bedside revolved a world of solicitude. A hero returned battered from the wars could not have evoked such a going-on of mustard and hot water, towels and ice, tea and toast as Miss Granberry got under way from the moment Arnold was found unconscious on the balcony. Mary Mellody, home from the shop, bathed his brow; Sammy ran to the drug-store; Angelo played the fiddle; Theresa watched him from the window with limpid Italian eyes, while the Cook-house Kid sat on the bed—the fallen champion was hedged about with interest. When Captain Calhoun put his head in the door he was lied to with easy subterfuge; Mr. Arnold merely had a headache, and indeed he did! Even Bernice Murasky, the imperious shop-lady, put by her shrewish disdain and came up with a softened judgment of this foolish business.

But none upbraided the sufferer. Down in the world of half-lights, where chastity must smile, and honor devise pretexts; where life wounds itself, beating a slow way with crippled wings, there is an amplitude of charity like unto that revealed for the stranger

in the tent of Abraham; the indwellers can not moralize nor draw scientific deductions from the grind of the gods.

Therefore, Ham, though he got drunk, was most patiently restored, jestingly rehabilitated, and in nowise scolded.

But there was an astonished note among them all. What of the romance? Was Arnold married, and if so, what of the bride in blue? Among all the varying circles in which he revolved, impossible stories had run. Here, at Miss Granberry's, the thing focused—*they* had seen her; she was no street myth, but what had become of the country girl in blue? But none questioned the recreant, his mood did not invite; for thirty hours he was uncommonly sick.

The Blue Star Laundry poet had his theory. To Nella Free and Mary and Bernice Murasky, in the dusk of the hall, he whispered a complete, evolved reconstruction of the downfall.

"No wedding-bells for her," asserted Mr. Jarbo. "She shook him, and he took to drink. It's elemental, it's epic, in its simple grandeur—a fair, fa[illegible] face—a broken heart—and then quick to the bo[illegible]e.' The poet was scratching through his pockets for a pencil and the back of a laundry tag whereon to write.

"She wouldn't!" cried Miss Mellody indignantly. "That little thing with the big eyes?—she wouldn't!"

"'O, Woman, in our hours of ease,'" sighed Sammy, the pencil in his mouth.

"My Lands!" Miss Granberry routed the gossips from the hall. "Don't clutter up the place with any

more poetry! The drawer of your washstand is most full now, Mr. Jarbo."

But on the balcony outside, the poet mooned an hour over the deceit of woman. "What a man wants to do is to get 'em out of his system," mused he, and then went down to Unc' Pop's back room to place his feet on the table and read *The Compendium of Universal Knowledge and World's Gazetteer.* It was new and bound in shiny red morocco, with gilt letters, and one could carry it in one's vest pocket. It is not often one can procure universal knowledge for forty cents. Mr. Jarbo saw that though the print was fine, yet the volume was small; and that if he began at half-past seven o'clock and read diligently until ten, he would have assimilated the cumulative wisdom of the human race for six thousand years.

Arnold lay that night in a stupor. The sparrows were shrilling about the gable and on the rails of the balcony when he came back to actualities; the door of his room was open on a glad morning with the fog twisted into ringlets on the hills. Miss Granberry was tiptoeing about his bed, her gray hair escaping from a sweeping cap.

"Granny?" The voice from the bed was the first lucid utterance since his return from the quest of forgetfulness.

"There, there, dearie!" She sat by the bed, her hand on the cold compress across his brow. "Never mind—never mind!"

There was a long silence, while they listened to the sparrows.

"I was drunk as a fool," he muttered; "did I lose my watch—dad's watch?"

"No, no; only the crystal's broken. There—be quiet."

"Granny," he continued, "I was arrested and rode in the wagon—the [illegible] getting pretty low."

"Now, boy," she whispered, crouching lower to stroke his cheek, "don't you mind. Theresa's got some pretty shoes with [illegible] on them—that Nella girl brought them for her."

"That's like Nel," he mused, "and did Unc' Pop get the rope for the barrel swing?"

"Yes—and the expressman gave us a lime barrel—" Miss Granberry pressed Arnold's hand on the coverlet. There were few small concerns of the block into which he did not stop to inquire on his way downtown of a sunny morning when the Happy Alley kids were all around Aurelio Pico, the retired vaquero, who was wont to bring his spindle into the alley and braid his horsehair riatas along its ninety-foot free space. Even the solemn, tarry-faced students in the Japanese boarding-houses across the street knew him and he them; he was curiously attached to the nondescript old block which was neither of the Latin quarter, nor of the respectable "hill," nor yet Chinatown, though the oriental wave was fast submerging it.

Arnold lay quiet with Miss Granberry's hand on his compressed brow.

"Granny, I had a fight—a big Swede and a lad of the cavalry—"

"There, there, never mind, I know!"

"And the police ran in a girl—a girl who wasn't doing a thing—"

"Never mind, boy; you rest. Dearie, I know how weak and foolish we are!"

He turned, beaten by his recollections, to the wall. "Granny, I didn't marry Sylvia. You can't understand—but I had to get out of it."

"I know, boy," she quavered, "I believe you must have *tried*. And there's a God who cares for trying. O, yes; I've not lived seventy years down here not to understand!"

A shadow fell in the door's sun. A manikin in blue overalls and red knit cap stared in. The young man started. It seemed odd—that child? His mind went back—it was his, then?—the waif from the country-up-in-back?

"That kid," he muttered, "didn't she—didn't they—"

"She never came back and the woodsman left Tuesday. He waited for the wedding, but you did not come, and his ship was leaving for the North."

He turned away again and, crooning a lullaby, the old woman left the room. After while the young man drew up in bed and motioned to the infant.

"I'll call you Bill," he began, "and I'll see you through—you and the pup."

The Cookhouse Kid gouged its ear and gurgled.

"Bill," continued the foster-guardian, "for you and the pup I'll have to make good." And when Miss Granberry returned, his voice came thickly from the coverlet. "Bill, when I get through this, I'll finish the barrel swing for the Alley bunch—you and Angelo and Theresa and the Joost kids."

"Mr. Hammy," put in the old lady, shaking her finger from the end of the bedstead, "I'd rather have you get roaring drunk seven days a week than to forget to finish the barrel swing." But she sighed as she departed.

Mr. Hammy passed a restful day. He dwelt on a multitude of things, and a deal of others he shut steadfastly from his mind. "What was I saying?" he muttered. "Who'd I talk to? Did I drag *her* name into all that bar-room gossip? Poor kid—poor little girl—I'll write—I'll tell her—"

He broke off, staring at the paper joss in the dim corner of his room, a single idea beginning to form out of chaos: "I'll write and explain—I'll send the money—or *did* I send the money?"

He thought slowly, then whirled out of bed with a cry, searching for his clothes, and knelt, going through the pockets with shaking fingers.

"Granny," he called, rushing to the door, "did I have any money left?"

"It's on the dresser with your keys," she answered, and he looked feverishly for it. There were gold and silver and a crumpled note—of the one hundred and sixty-eight dollars of his legislative salary, there remained fifty-one.

But nothing else—not a bill of hers! He sat unsteadily down on the bed and called back a jarring memory of white-aproned men, laughing cronies, lunch counters, sawdust, the voices of women, Japanese galleries, liquor smells, gold-woven tapestries, glittering incandescents, the blare of bands, quarrels—and oblivion.

"How'd I get home?" he muttered. "Somebody found me—somebody! A woman! Robbed—robbed! O, you damned fool—*her* money—ten thousand!"

He reeled back and fell face downward across the bed.

At half-past six o'clock Mary Mellody came down the hill from the Powell Street car. She was tired, thinly dressed, and the mist fell damp. Under the awning of the Family Liquor Store she met a woman who seemed taller, broader, more radiant in every way of physical personality than she really was, because of a curious emanation of an inner self. Her dark hair clustered low on her brow and about the fine ears; her nostrils were wide, her chin a trifle sharp, her neck beautifully modeled under the skin's pallor; her eyes indistinguishably uncertain in color. She wore a pale gray silk waterproof enveloping her to the chin, a cap of the same stuff, suggesting the elegant ease of simplicity.

"Does Mr. Arnold live above—in these lodgings?" she asked.

"Yes," answered Mary.

"I wish to see him." She was ascending the stairs, but, with a smile, stepped aside for the lame girl to precede. Miss Mellody faltered before the stranger's sureness. "I think—Mr. Arnold's sick—I think."

"He'll see me. It's another day of San Francisco winter, isn't it?" Her arm was assisting Mary as they reached the floor above. Almost by a gesture of command she won from the other the direction of Arnold's rooms, and passed on to them, leaving the lame girl

with an intense and envying doubt of the inexplicable grace of her carriage.

In the passage the stranger saw an old woman clucking to a parrot hung in the dirty window of a kitchen beyond. She paused, and at the instant from a door directly by her, a young man appeared. He wore a beflowered lounging robe of padded Chinese silk and a cigarette was between his teeth. His dark face was hard; a feverish surprise shot over it, then he calmly threw away the cigarette and stepped back, as if expecting her to enter. She did—their recognition was mutual and instantaneous. She looked an instant about the jumbled apartments dim in the ray of a shaded student lamp on the table. The place seemed to surprise her more than did the occupant.

Then she turned; the man was smiling at her with a faint amusement.

"I wished to see you," she began coldly. "You may remember our meeting—"

"On Grant Avenue? I was very drunk. Please be seated."

She sank into the chair indicated; he stood at the table's end, the splotch of light from under the lamp lighting vividly his flowered robe, but dimly his face. She wished to see it plainer, feeling an insecurity, apparently, in her situation. Then she realized that he was studying her intently; when her eyes rose to his, he still held his interest.

"And later—you had a hard fall—"

"Still—and very—drunk." He interrupted her again gravely. "You're the street evangelist." He fingered his cigarette case. "I suppose our meeting

explains itself. Perhaps you called to illuminate me on my ways of life—"

"Quite the contrary. I've called to apologize—rather to explain what is hard to explain." She sat forward nervously in the big chair. "Did you have money—quite a sum of money—that night?"

Arnold's face lit with reassurance. He came nearer, eagerly, as though he would have touched her hand lying on the table.

"I did—and I lost it. And you—why I can't begin to thank you!"

She sat back with a sudden wincing, shading her face with her glove.

"Please don't. I didn't save it for you. It's lost."

"Lost?"

"I found a roll of money in the cab—it must have been considerable—and it seemed to me unsafe for you to have. I didn't know the cabman, or where you might possibly go later, and I thought I would keep it for you."

"Yes. But lost—"

"It's desperately hard to say. I am a stranger to you"—she put her hand to her hair nervously, and again leaned to him—"but I lost the money that night. When we reached the bottom of the hill, it had slipped somewhere. I searched in the cab and up the street again, and everywhere. I couldn't find it—it *couldn't* have been dropped on the sidewalk."

"You couldn't find it?"

"No. I put it in my dress—here—but—well, I've lost your money." She rose and faced him abruptly: "How much was it?"

Arnold was lighting another cigarette: "You don't mind if I smoke? I'm a bit shot to pieces to-day."

"But the money!" she demanded. "It's a desperate matter with me—how much was it?"

The young man rested his hands leisurely on the table, and looked at her with a smile. "Nothing—I'm not quite sure myself."

"You know," she retorted, "it was a large amount. How much?"

"Very little."

"It *was* not. I am a stranger here—I am preaching in the street, but that is no title to honesty. I've lost your money, and I'm going to account for it. How much was it? I demand to know." Her voice rose sharply.

"Well," Arnold's response was velvety nonchalant, "forty-five dollars."

"You know better. I saw a hundred-dollar bill on the outside, and there were many more. I wish the truth."

"That hundred was merely phony—I mean counterfeit. I beg pardon, but the language of the street comes a deal easier with this present head."

"I wish to know the truth of this money I have lost for you."

"Well, one hundred, and two twenties, and three tens and—honestly, I believe it was one hundred and sixty-five in all—merely that—don't distress yourself." Arnold flicked his cigarette ash airily. She did not guess, beneath his measuring ease, the splitting sickness on him. "I suppose, as you are a preacher, you worried a deal. It was a hard fix," he murmured.

"You think I am an evangelist, which I am not in the least." Her voice had a suggestion of irritation at being put on the defensive before this unregenerate and his languid eye-interest of the silken movement of her raincoat.

"It was something about our souls, I recall," said he; "and didn't I say something foolish? I was in the devil's own humor. I suppose I was unusually drunk, but I wanted to be drunk, I'm glad I was drunk. But it's a shame to embarrass you."

"This is not you who is speaking." She watched steadily his mordant eyes. "You belittle your soul."

"I have none. I am a liar and a thief." He smiled slowly at her flushing face, the brightening of her eye, the imperious daintiness about her.

"You're the earth-man—your feet in the clay," she went on, "but your soul is above all this. And you can't even deceive yourself. You got drunk to try it, for some reason, and you failed!"

He watched her still with a gentle satire of interest. She went on with a direct charge to his rebuffing. "You can find the serene and inner life. Beyond that, nothing matters—nothing is real."

"Beg pardon, but in my world everything matters and is real. You yourself are very real—behind this patter of yours I believe you're magnificently human."

She steeled herself against the admiration his eyes paid to her regal figure, her face, her sensuous womanhood. And yet he had defeated her; she could not find way against his irony.

"Well," she turned at the door, "I lost your money —I'll recover it or repay you every cent."

"Why bother? I imagine you're a scientist, or a theosophist, or something extremely superior. Anyhow, you just said nothing mattered, nothing is real. Well, my money was a mere human hallucination—why worry about it? What's a handful of paper to do with the eternal verities?"

She hesitated to control the anger on her tongue. The jester broke the hollow sphere of her serenity; he went on undaunted.

"I remember a deal of your talk. I wonder how you come to be doing that sort of thing. You're a creature far different"—he, also, hesitated—"it doesn't fit you. Who sent you?"

She recovered her control. "The saintliest man I ever knew—a clergyman, a worker in the worst of London's East End."

She stopped, and the man went on with shrewd mercilessness. "He asked you to—a dying request—and he loved you."

She started at his guess. "Yes," she answered simply, but in wonder. "He asked me to give men his message on the streets of every city in the world. He had worked among them—the very worst. He left me money for this and I could not refuse. And I've taught as I saw—Christ, a symbolic promise for the race, one of the spiritually developed figures, a prophet."

"I thought He was a man who fought through a hard game—and lost. But you have it that there's nothing to lose or suffer. Let's apply this to my case. I wasn't drunk, and money—nothing! Stuff of dreams."

She bit her lip. "You don't believe me!" And to her swift anger his admiration again paid tribute. "It is insufferable to rest under this imputation!"

"Do you imagine for a moment that I believe you have that money?"

She was silent and he went on gravely. "Now, please don't. I have an awful headache—one of the worst headaches that an earth-man with his feet in the clay could have. I take it you're a prophet of the new spirituality—I'm reading a bit about it in the magazines. Well, I'm back with the cave-men. I get down one day and bump my head on the ground to God, and the next, crack the bones of my enemies and offer them to the devil. Real bones—real devil."

At the door she turned again, calmly disregarding him. "I shall advertise—try every way to find that money. And then, if it isn't found, I'll have to accept your word and repay you. One hundred and sixty-five dollars?"

"Yes, thank you; it will keep me in cigarettes a month—real cigarettes, the kind a man with his feet in the clay smokes—"

Her face showed nothing: he was suddenly contrite. "I beg pardon. Don't mind me. They'll tell you around this town I was never serious in my life."

"But you believe that I lost that money? You believe me?"

"Absolutely. And you me?"

"Not in the least."

"Thank you. You are a person of excellent judgment."

She extended a card with her gloved hand. "My

name is Grace Wayne. My address is Twenty-six Weston Road, Melbourne."

"Australia, eh? I thought you were an American straight through."

She continued coldly: "I am touring the world on a mission—sent, I told you, by a dying man's request that I could not evade."

"To tell men of the new scientific God. I don't believe that's what he meant you to do. I had a curious idea the other night that you had failed, somehow—you were an actress reciting lines of some magnificent vanity or other. God knows what! But no man cared."

She watched him steadily; he went on with a sudden new interest.

"Right up the line from you there's a crowd beating out sinners with a drum—the Salvation Army. What do you think of them?"

She smiled with a trifle of supercilious amusement. "They are very good people—they are attempting much;" then added, "on their level, in their way, very good people."

"No, they're bad people—most of them have been. That's why I can blow in on Adjutant Hogjaw Fremstedt to-day and ask him to take charge of a girl from a dance-hall that I'm going to get out of jail. I wouldn't dare ask any good people to mix in that. But Fremstedt—he was a bum himself, once."

She ignored him, and then smiled, putting out her hand, and he felt a firm pressure and was puzzled at it. "Good-by. I shall come to inquire about this money."

So in the end she had confused his jesting. Under

the lamp he read the card again. "Grace Wayne—she's interesting. She's got class above the rest of those fakirs. But science or theosophy, or whatever it is—oh my head—my head!" His hand went to the wet compress. "And Sylvia—her money gone!"

But after a while he muttered: "Ah, well—let it go—let everything go! I didn't care for her—but, O, little girl!" And in the silent room his sick fancies visualized dim figures from the night about him; the preacher's simple daughter, kind and young and fair in her steadfast faith, and then this other woman he had later mocked, a sort of noble sweetness in her grace and bearing—she, too, had believed in his soul; and the faith of neither had he been able to crush, outrage them as he might.

But shortly he refused to think of them. "I'll go on now," he murmured. "It was a last chance, but I broke with it. I'll go the limit now."

After a moment he was himself again—a hard-faced young man of the town, lighting a cigarette with a wax thread from the delicate Satsuma bowl on the table, and then lying back to blow smoke rings moodily into the violet gloom of his apartments.

CHAPTER IX

Assemblyman Fred Weldy of the fifty-second district came down from the capital every Saturday to see his wife and babies, his mother, a few political persons with whom there were matters to discuss, and to pass an hour at cards with his uncle, Mr. Radke, of the Family Liquor Store. This was a long-established custom; ever since his job-printing 'prentice days, Fred had made it a point to be in the little back room of the saloon Saturday evening, to drink three beers, smoke limitless pipes and play a "Series." There were five games for which the job printer and the grocer contended, and Unc' Pop had, in a greasy notebook behind his bar, a record of hundreds of games and thousands of points of Mississippi High-Low, Seven Up, Casino, Hearts and Whistle Jack.

At these silent sessions business could go smash. Never would Unc' Pop leave the back bar to wait on fretful women in his grocery department; they would come in and pound a nickel on his counter in vain, while the merchant grunted his displeasure behind the screened door. Customers usually went behind the counters and helped themselves on these occasions, but never would the grocer protest. "Fritzie had to be stuck," custom, or no custom.

Another rule of Fred's was to dine with Arnold on his over-Sunday sojourns in the city. They invariably

went to the Odeon, where the best German dishes were; where one came on a deal of sardellen and cheese smells; and where, after the Sunday Schuetzen Fest at Shell Mound, there would be a brave array of green coats, cockades and impressive bronze and silver medals along the bar.

Here, the two friends were at a secluded corner on a Saturday of the mid-winter legislative session, and with them Louis Ferreri and Eddie Ledyard, of the Market Street shoe house. The four were intimately at ease; they had "joshed" one another over a score of reminiscent and familiar matters, of the street and town. The three of them were "digging" Louis Ferreri, who was part owner of a horse that had finished last in three consecutive starts across the bay. The slot-machine man chewed his cigar and grinned; he shifted his tiger's-head diamond, sticking the forget-me-not pin in its place through his four-in-hand, and grinned again helplessly, until Mannie Murasky came in and went joyously back to join them. That shifted the conversation from Louis' luckless "skate" for a minute. Mannie had a fervent story. Yes, sir, over in San Leandro there was a "comer"—a boiler-maker whom Mr. Murasky, at the next meeting of the Potrero Athletic Club, was to translate to pugilistic fame.

"C'n he put 'em over?" retorted the discoverer. "A wallop from t'at guy would stop a ferry-boat—a straight left an' t'en a shift; in an' out he c'n fight—see-saw, duck an' stall; on foot-work t'at mutt'd make Gans look like he was nailed to th' mat. He's a wonder, a wiz—"

"Yes, like that other farmer you imported who

fought three rounds, and then suddenly remembered his mother was opposed to boxing," said Ledyard.

And the quartet hooted Mr. Murasky and his "champ." Ledyard, the boyish bookkeeper at the shoe store, brought the conversation again to the races, and again Mannie breasted the onset. He had a horse in pickle—yes, he did—something juicy in the fifth, and magnanimously would let his friends in to the roof. "Th' talent t'ink this horse is a jungler from Spokane," confided Mannie, shaking his thin shoulders until his yellow diamond let loose a headlight radiance. "It's exclusive—Bomba, in th' fift'—don't forget t'at name. Sell your sister's hatpins an' get on."

The shoe store man's eyes glittered nervously; Mannie *had* landed a long shot one time; he busied himself much about the track. Perhaps?—

At his side, Arnold suddenly muttered unintelligibly. He had been in some queer moods the past month, his cronies said—ever since his big drunk, in fact. He was still immaculate in dress, but he drank more than he had ever been known to before, and had been at the race-track every afternoon while drawing his salary from the state treasury for his clerical work at the capitol.

Strange stories had gone about concerning Ham—things at which even the tenderloin winced a bit; they centered about some unknown country girl whom he was said to have brought to the city, robbed and turned adrift. The Street was pretty swift, but that *was* a raw deal—it didn't seem like the fellow. But there was Fergy, of the Maplewood, who had seen the money, and a half-dozen who had seen the girl, and

some had even heard Arnold's declaration that he was to marry her. And then she had disappeared, and J. Ham had been going it strong. He had spent more money than ever before, plunged higher on the ponies, drifted deeper into the after-midnight life, reckless, mordant, untiring, unappeased.

But in the hectic life of the Street, the affair was already almost forgotten by his familiars. It was some queer work, but then it was no one's business. The grand jury inquiry into the registration frauds had also dropped from view; some unseen machinations of the sinuous power that creeps for ever about the underpinning of the social structure had intervened and an acquiescent if doubting public was gulled from the issue. The banded evil of the city flung John Hamilton Arnold forward as a challenge; honest men dared not accept the wage of battle, and his nonchalant perjury was now of the past. He, himself, had bothered about it least of all; he had been busily taking to himself the aids of oblivion.

"What odds are you getting, Ham? How's Presidenté posted?" repeated Eddie Ledyard curiously.

"Five to one, straight. Just a flyer; I don't know anything about the horse."

But young Ledyard's face grew crafty; there was "something doing"—sure there was!

"I c'n get you better," interposed Mannie Murasky; "five an' a half."

"Presidenté—Presidenté—" repeated Ledyard, "let's look up the form." He rose, and then turned to the table: "Coming out some night, Hammy? We've got

a new piano, and Stella's home from school. And mother's always asking why you never come."

Arnold waved an indifferent good-by as Mannie went with the clerk.

"That lad's got no call to play a cent," he muttered. "I used to run with him in school, and now he's keeping his mother and sister on his salary."

"There's nobody compelled to play the races," Ferreri protested sluggishly. "Why don't these lambs stay out of the life?"

"Well, as the game is shoved at 'em night and day on every corner, in every newspaper and by every sure-thing man they meet, I guess staying away isn't so easy. They don't think—they don't consider until the dope is soaking out of them—and there's another long-term sucker or another vote for the push, when we need to lift anything."

Ferreri sat up with slow interest.

"And what's getting into *you?*" he mumbled.

"O, nothing! I just watch the game played out—that's all."

"You ought to see the sports hanging out at Sacramento," put in Weldy. "They can't do enough for us, either."

"You're on that committee to investigate the charges that bribery beat the Lacy bills, ain't you?" queried Ferreri, with renewed interest. "What'll the farmers scare up next?"

The legislator shot a nervous glance at Arnold.

"They want an investigation, all right," said he. "I guess the track must have done some raw work last session."

"Cost my company ten thousand." The slot-machine agent languidly adjusted himself in his seat. His concern had six thousand gambling machines in the city, reaping a harvest that made ten thousand dollars for buying the legislature a pittance; Ferreri himself had a contempt for the statesmen.

Weldy was restless, seeming to rise against some implication of himself in this nonchalant recital; he glanced about the café and then turned defensively to the others.

"Twenty-eight suicides, and nine men in the pen from playing the races—that's what Lacy said was the record in this city during the season, when he demanded this bribery investigation to see what beat his bill. That's pretty tough—everything so open for boys like Eddie Ledyard."

"God's sake," retorted the slot-machine man, "hear him talk! Say, you ain't bucking, are you?"

"I'm on the committee," Weldy shifted his big red hands. "It's pretty close. Lots of the members are afraid the investigation will be made."

Ferreri sat up straight.

"Well, don't *you* know how *you're* going to vote? If your committee reports against the investigation, that'll settle it, won't it?"

"Well, there's a lot to be said," answered Weldy, and then he felt Arnold's foot against his leg, a pressure that stopped him. "O, it's all right, of course; everything'll go all right," he concluded lamely. "Stillman—Ham, here—everybody knows' *I'm* not bucking anybody!"

"I guess not" retorted the slot-machine politician.

"Just remember who elected you, who put you in line for the easy money."

The assemblyman's big face reddened. "Here, you," he growled and glanced at his sponsor for support—"no crook sporting man runs me!"

Ferreri laughed shortly. "Crooks, eh?"

"All crooks," interposed Arnold. "No such thing as a straight sport. Crooks?—why we're all crooks!

"'We're most of us liars an' 'arf of us thieves—
An' the rest are as rank as can be;
But once in a while, we can finish in style—'"

Ferreri laughed again. This was well enough from Arnold—every one was used to J. Ham; but Weldy—he was only a cheap legislator.

But Louis wouldn't argue with Ham; he would always make some retort that you could only answer with a laugh, and the laugh sounded sickly.

Louis had, he said, a date over on Golden Gate. He presently left the two friends alone. Weldy sat, sprawled on the small of his back, sucking his cigar, his big legs stretched under the table.

"It makes me sick," he growled. "Ham, it's taken for granted that I'm out for the money. You don't know anything about it—the pushing and hauling and whispering—we're a hot bunch of lawmakers, we are! All the dirty little rats in the state are up there to give us orders."

"How's the bribery business coming?"

Weldy threw up his hands with a gesture pathetic in his virile manliness. "God's sake, I wish I was out!

It's all on *me*, the way the committee stands, two to two. I just wanted to ask you, Ham. The whole administration is trying to stop a report in favor of an inquiry, and here's my union, and all the decent people I know, hounding us the other way. There's a delegation of preachers up there now—my wife's uncle's one of 'em—from Alameda County—"

Arnold studied his friend's worried face. He was surprised; he had taken it for granted that Weldy was getting his "bit" in every chance that came. It was a fool statesman who didn't pick up his five thousand a session these days when the prize-fights, the gambling machines and the races were all on the rack, and the big money from higher up was also abroad.

And then Arnold had a curious sensation; he suddenly recalled a day when he and Fred Weldy would have thought exactly the same on the ethics of "easy money," but now he was calloused to it, while Fred hemmed and hawed. Arnold remembered further that he had, in his own mind, through all their friendship, assured himself of a certain superiority to the job printer.

"The union's playing hell," resumed Fred. "I thought they'd stand for the program, but the boys passed resolutions against that bribery deal. You see where it puts me, Ham."

Arnold smiled at the assemblyman's childlike insistence.

"But it just struck me all of a sudden the other day why the gang got behind me so strong on that grand jury business, and why you were put up to swear what you did! The House is torn up pretty bad, and I see

now how badly the track and the gambling men need me."

"Fred," Arnold leaned to him across the table, "the men who run this town haven't any use for you or me. They'll use us and throw us aside when the time shows fit. They don't owe me anything, and I've no love for them—it's every man for himself in this game. But you're my friend. I didn't go before the grand jury to help the gamblers at Sacramento, but to help you. You were in more danger than you'll ever know. And there was your mother, and I—"

"I know you did, Ham. But you took awful chances. You're the most reckless man I ever knew!"

"Program." Ham smiled distantly. "Fred, it was all cut and dried—some men on that jury knew exactly how I would testify. Man, you don't know yet how smooth things run, do you?"

"I wish I was out of it," sighed Weldy. "The union's knocking me, and my business is running down. Lord, Ham, I was happier in the shop. Don't you remember when you used to come in every afternoon, and I'd be kicking the job-press, and we'd talk socialism—how we read Marx and were red-hot for the brotherhood of man? You were just out of college and I'd just got through 'prenticing, and we were both straight and full of big ideas, and no man could mutter anything about easy money to us like Louis did just now. We've gone pretty far, ain't we, old man?"

"Pretty far," said the other. "They grind you through the mill—Fred, I know!"

"We thought we were Socialists," laughed Weldy

mirthlessly. "We were chuck-a-block with big schemes, weren't we? We were going to get into union politics and hammer away, and lead the boys to our way of thinking, and crack over some of the dirt we saw all around. The Social Commonwealth, the Fraternity of Man—Lord, Lord!"

"Fred, there's nothing wrong with our theories—our beautiful scheme of human betterment and all that—but *we're* wrong—that's it. The run of men aren't intelligent enough, aren't honest enough, to conduct a highly organized state. Character, that's what's lacking."

"Well, they ain't all as bad as that."

"Aren't they? Well, now, take the organization here, the thing that rules, the real life of the present social state—for the outward form of government doesn't cut any figure—take it from Barron Chatom, who runs things here for a half-dozen moneyed men in New York—take it from Chatom down through every class of men who concern themselves with public affairs, who *do* things, down through them all to the hypo fiends we beat out of the lodging-houses on election day—who's honest among them all? Can you name *one?*"

The statesman shut his eyes against the smoke of his cigar for a minute; then he murmured in protest: "Thunder—thunder!"

"O, there are *some,*" retorted Arnold. "Unc' Pop, Captain Calhoun, Sammy Jarbo, poor devil driving a laundry wagon for ten a week and writing his verses to Mary Mellody—but show me the men who are shoved against life where it's white hot, who *win,* and

who aren't willing to stand for crooked work? I don't say they do it—they don't need to do it—they *stand* for it, which is the same thing when results are figured. Socialism? Hell! As long as men haven't sand enough to run a ward primary straight, they'll never run an industrial revolution. Show *me*—I'm crooked—but I deal with crooks."

"O, thunder—thunder!" protested the legislator feebly.

"Show me a man in politics who isn't advanced by crookedness, who isn't willing to keep his mouth shut about the thousand deals away down beneath him that boost him along—one man who fights against raw work in and out of season! Why, he'd be crazy, wouldn't he? He couldn't be elected to referee a dog fight!"

"You're putting it pretty strong, Ham, pretty strong. Here's the people, the great, strong heart of the people—"

"The people be damned!" said Arnold. "Let them be gouged—they stand for it."

"You're anti-social," answered Weldy solemnly. "You're a regular bandit—an outlaw. Ham, you're the most dangerous man in the community."

The other smiled and broke off suddenly. "How's Lillie and the babies?"

"Fine. We're building over in Berkeley, but it's a tight rub to get the money. I'm going to get the mortgage renewed next week. And when I get through with this cursed legislature, I'll stick close to the office and go home to Lillie and mother and the kids every night, and pay my union dues and attend the meetings.

But the boys'll never get me into politics again. No dirty gambler can say he owns *me!*"

Arnold laughed and slapped his friend on the back as they went up Market Street through the damp and shining night. Before the Maplewood door he stopped. "Come on—have a drink!"

Fred protested; he had had enough at dinner; he was going to take the next boat to Berkeley, where his wife was boarding while the cottage was being built. But Arnold insisted; he dragged Fred in, and the first man they met was Harry Stillman, the police commissioner, immaculate, debonair, smiling in a crowd at the bar. He left it and came to the new-comers. The legislator seemed crestfallen before the politician's witty sallies.

"Down over Sunday, eh? Fred, we're losing you—they tell me you don't mix much with the boys. Now, here, you know—" He jerked some quip in the assemblyman's ear and they both laughed, Weldy in odd protest. "Let's go in the gold room," added Stillman. His eye roved to Arnold with a quick significance which the latter understood, for he turned away.

"We'll crack a small bottle," continued the police commissioner. "Jack, join us in twenty minutes." He threw his furred automobile coat to an attendant at the door to the rear of the Maplewood establishment, and Weldy followed him within.

Arnold idled ten minutes with a group at the bar; then went to the street.

Of late he was harried by restless imps—"little puckers under your scalp," he described them to Sammy Jarbo—that would not allow him to be alone,

to be unoccupied, that forbade him the hours of reading or idling with his voice and piano at his rooms, which had formerly served as surcease to his vagrant life. Night and day now he must be down-town, around the haunts of his kind. For one week he dwelt moodily on Sylvia Spring, and then he killed remembrance with another drunk and went his way more evenly.

"She's gone home," he told himself, "and some day I'll send her money back—I'll break the books for her or cut into something at the city hall. I'll be square there, and then forget her. But the rest—damn them—I'll knife this town deep somewhere!"

And so, baffling his memories, he plunged on the races, a figure in the betting room, with his clean-graven face, his immaculate clothes, each afternoon. He began to plot how he would get an easy graft at the city hall. He had connections powerful enough to let him in on many sources of revenue hitherto passed indifferently by, for he cared little about money. He had spent as he received, and for years had forgotten whether or not he had ever had ambitions. It had been as easy to jest with them as it had been with his conscience, to whip and bind them to his evil.

"But now I'll get money," he promised, as he stood without the Maplewood. "It's what they're all at, and I can be cleverer than most. I'll get all I can—I'll get back for what they've done to me!"

And this idea that now he was matching his cunning, his single wit, against an enormous, compact and intricately organized social force, malign, soulless and of illimitable power, stuck to him. He suggested

to himself the cave-man, an outlaw cave-man, contriving to outwit a mammoth—yes, the renegade savage in the place of the savages. He glutted his humors with the picture. The most cunning savage might slay the mammoth and then cheat his fellows, too!

Three doors from where he stood by the curb, the glare of an electric sign above the side entrance of the Maplewood café fell on a red motor-car. A woman was the only occupant. Arnold watched her for a time, and then went leisurely to the machine.

"Hello, Nel," he said, with brusk cheeriness to dispel his mood; "how's the world with you?"

The girl hardly stirred in her furs; her eyes were fixed on the crowds in the street of fakirs.

Sunday nights the human tide eddied and choked the thoroughfare, congesting about the haranguing speakers, the beaters of drums and cymbals, the strident panaceaists and proclaimers of revolutions. But Nella Free was watching one beyond the others—the woman in black, who towered above the street throngs, whose face she saw under the flare and swing of the gas torch; whose arm, lifting the somber robe, was classic in its appeal, whose voice thrilled over the yapping fakirs, so that now and then the girl in the motor-car caught a word of its resurgent fervor.

She laid a hand on the young man's sleeve as he leaned over the tonneau. "Listen! It's grand, just like a theater—like an actress speaking!"

"It is," answered Arnold indifferently. "Acting—superb acting!"

The girl looked at him with curious, attentive rebuke. "You're getting bitter, Hammy, ain't you?

'And you're getting funny little lines about your eyes. You don't care for anything or anybody."

"Superb acting," he murmured, and smiled at her; then swung lightly into the seat beside her, snapping open his silver cigarette case.

The girl turned to him with a pleased laugh; from the shift of her furs the perfume of violets exhaled. The young man suddenly descended, and, without word, leaving her astonished, disappeared in the doorway of the Maplewood.

CHAPTER X

"Love," said the laundry route poet, dissecting his *raviolis* at Sedaini's on pay night, "is the divinest ecstasy of the human organism, but it's fatal to genius. Herrick and Lovelace and some of those second-raters framed up some good stuff with love as the *motif*, but the big men never monkeyed with it."

Mary Mellody looked pained and in much doubt; it was hard to dwell with the fat young poet's soul. In her hand-bag she had at least eight inches of ballad burdened with the amorous tragedy of one Tiburico Vasquez, an early California outlaw, who eloped with his friend's wife, and was thereafter hanged through the husband's machinations, which Mr. Jarbo had confided to her for criticism; the stanzas dripped with tender passion, and the poet had squeezed her fingers ecstatically as he read them to her on the stairs.

But now Miss Mellody turned to Sammy in confusion, a spot of color on her pale cheeks, a catch in her voice: "You don't care for nothing," she declared. "Sammy—Sammy!"

"I don't?" protested he. "Look at me, girl; you'll be fatal to me."

He grasped her hand across the table, and they drank in each other's glances, Mary with her color heightening, her eyes growing bigger under the poet's hypnosis, until she flung about from him on the chair.

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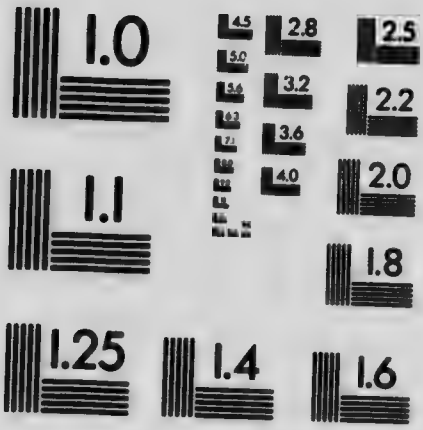

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"O, you're awful, just awful, Sammy!"

The laundry route poet uprose and strode the little café, Napoleonically; he tried to frown, and then came back to sit across from her.

"Sweet Mellody," he began presently, with a softening voice, "how'll I ever turn out the big stuff with you? You make me feel flimsy. How'll I ever get past the forty-second stanza of *Pizarro*—with *you?*"

"I don't know," she faltered. "I suppose I'm just only in the way!"

The poet shook his head lugubriously, but without speech.

But as they went slowly out and paused under the balcony of the Family Liquor Store, ere going to their rooms, he saw, within her eyes, sonnets, rondeaus, cycles of such songs as Dante found in the gaze of Beatrice, or Abelard in Heloise. Perhaps, after all, it didn't matter so much.

Miss Granberry found them hand in hand coming up the lodging-house stairs, and discreetly turned within the little kitchen to scold the parrot. Nella Free met them in the hall with a nervous laugh.

"My," she said, "you kids! Where's Hammy?"

"We don't see so much of him now," answered the poet. "He's going it pretty fast down-town, isn't he? *You* ought to know."

Nella laughed again in her usual good-natured constraint. She was obsessed by her idleness, her vacant mind, her good clothes; her lover, for expedient reasons, forbade her to mingle much with the life of the down-town, where otherwise she would have been—it was "politics," and she reasoned on it not at all. But

she chafed and fretted, heart-hungry, inutile, for ever going about with her nervous little laughs and small questionings.

At times she envied Bernice Murasky, the apostate Jewess, the sullen shop-girl, who gnawed her fingers with fury when she saw Nella with a new hat, costing three times as much as Bernice earned in a month; but she could not have held herself a week at the level on which the shop-girl fought wildly against the conditions that were crushing her dreams, her worship of an unknown and glittering estheticism, the beautiful things and ways of life. Bernice, to herself, reviled the other girl, her inanities, her shallowness; here, she might have read, studied, traveled, found a dozen expressions for the piteous woman's note which the girl of Solinsky's was dying to give forth—and she thought of nothing but pleasing her lover, dressing prettily, idling about her flat. Debarred from friends, she chattered town gossip with her maid or messenger boys or the janitor.

She came to Sedaini's to eat the cheap *table d' hote* because "the boys made her laugh;" and up on Washington Street she wouldn't interfere with Harry's political affairs; she could really have a friend. When she visited Granberry's she invariably brought something for the Polacchi children—shoes for "Terry," as Arnold had nicknamed the small girl, a sweater for Angelo, or now, sweets for Bill, the waif. With these small gifts Nella supplicated tolerance in Miss Granberry's sharp eyes; but here she was mistaken, for the old woman did not draw back from Nella's ways of life. She guessed much, but, in her cap and black silk

gown, going to Trinity of Sundays, Miss Granberry found no judgment.

The hard town had taught her; one does not live forty years in San Francisco lodging-houses for nothing; one finds the infinite and necessary compromises with life. The divorce court or the morgue may make the summing-up of one's neighbors, but one can leave the signing of the count to God—so the little, old woman had it, and, kneeling to try the new shoes on the fisherman's orphan, she would mutter: "There, there, dearie—the pretty things—the pretty things! And who the giver is we'll not ask—she's only what men made her—there, there—dearie, run and play."

So in and out of Granberry's lodgings she fluttered with her silks and perfumes, her furtive gifts, her laughter and unrest, her Gipsy carelessness. It was the one spot in all the world where she was free, wholly free; she could gossip with Granny in the kitchen, listening indifferently to long tales of the days of Ralston; she could loll in Arnold's morris chair, smoking his cigarettes, or idle in Mary Mellody's room, conferring on fashions, or sit with the other girl on the edge of Sammy's bed, listening with doubtful appreciation to his abominable verses—here, in all the world the world held no winking wisdom about her; she was free, and her spark of personality found itself, her confused consciousness cleared. With them she had no need of pretense, for they faced each day with elemental, sophisticated simplicity. They had no need of pretense, either, and therefore had a charity impossible to the better ordered world. For good or evil they were cut off from its sincere largeness of

good, its clean friendlinesses, its buoyant virtues—they had to make their own and live them.

Of late Nella had not been at Sedaini's. Wally Walters, the silent pianist and rag composer, and Hammy Arnold, who could always make her laugh with his songs and contortions when he chose to mimic some histrionic idol of the day, were not now patrons of the four-bit *table d' hote.*

Arnold, in fact, had not slept at his lodgings for a fortnight. He had been let in on a great *coup* at the Emeryville races, where a secret clique put forward an unknown horse in a rich handicap, getting a light impost on their mount against which the unsuspecting public bet heavily on a popular favorite. But the "long shot" galloped home against a field that had no chance with him, and the inside people made an enormous profit. Arnold won four thousand dollars on the affair and lost three of it within the week, recklessly backing other horses. But it made him a great man among the cigar store habitués, the juvenile hangers-on of the form sheets. When J. Ham Arnold strolled into the smoking shop where Mannie Murasky supervised the gambling-machines, and cast an eye over the entries posted, envious youths craned to see what horse and odds he was considering.

He came back from the track a few days later broke. The book-makers had his other thousand besides three hundred borrowed from Torreri. He now secured fifty dollars from Fergy of the Maplewood on the plea that his salary from the People for eminent services rendered at the capitol was due. About the cafés his meteoric rise and fall at the track was the subject of

merriment. He met it with a serene smile, but he was weak and overlaid with drink, sleeplessness and throbbing humors. But he had forgotten, he told himself; he looked back on the brief, troubled rise of his better self, the pain of it all, as now a grotesque emotion; when the memory grew too acute he drank and plunged deeper in the life of the town. He had paid, out of his winnings, a month's rental on Miss Granberry's house, had sent two weeks' groceries to the place, a piece of gray dress goods for the old lady and a department store jumble of stuff to her protegés, but he had not been near his rooms. They strangely haunted him, the silence, the shadows, the wail of the wind on the balcony, the disarray of papers and books and music scattered over the floor and furniture. On his one visit there he had found a small soiled glove, stained, perfumed with the crushed stems of flowers, among the stuff on his dresser and staring at it, he closed the door and left.

But one reminder he had of Sylvia and her story. About the town, day and night, in the fight clubs and gambling places, the cafés, and across the bay at the races the lavender pup followed him. It was at his heels when it might be, and, abject, cringing, grotesque in its color and shambling uselessness, it waited for him, always waited in doorways and on curb. At first he resented this reminder of the country-up-in-back, and of the last snapping of the bond holding him to his better self, and then he came through brooding toleration to a sense of relation with the brute. He made a place for it at the hotel, and solemn, sad-eyed,

prematurely old, it seemed, the pup sat about the master.

"Old man," Arnold muttered, "what the devil do you want? I can't make out. Hungry, pup? Cold? No? Well, what are you watching me for?" And at other times he held one-sided conversations with the inquiring one: "We're broke to-day, pup, ain't we? They certainly cleaned us out in the fifth. Never mind; we'll wear diamonds when this bunch of bookies is striking us for hand-outs. Stick to me, old man. I'll fill that purple hide of yours with canvasback when we pull off the big win." And yet again he addressed the dog from his hidden trouble. "She liked you, didn't she?—the grand little girl! Well, we did our best to put her square, but it wasn't much, was it, pup? Here, you little cuss, look at me! Am I as bad as she's got a right to think?"

But he tore the memory from him; if there was in him the faint jewel of a good deed, he buried it deeper with outlawry. He turned from one bad affair to another. Stillman had told him that when the governor came back from New York he would be seen about the pardon. Ham must be patient—something would turn up soon.

The "something" did in the middle of the midwinter legislative session. Arnold was summoned from a Bush Street poker club one night by telephone to meet Stillman at the Maplewood. He was ushered to the gold room and they had a quart of champagne before the commissioner of police, the raconteur, and maker of quips, the agent for the boss and higher-ups, quelled his wit to the conferential reason of the meeting. Ar-

nold knew something was due; he idled back, watching Stillman's reflection in the polished panels of white birch and gold behind the table, waiting for the ripening.

At length, with fraternal assurance, Stillman, too, leaned back and sighed.

"I see we've got to handle Weldy," he said. "I thought he was going to hold out on us."

"How's that?" queried Arnold. He did not bother himself about politics at Sacramento, or even read the papers these days. "I thought he was making good up there?"

"Ham, you stung yourself on that fellow. You remember we gave him the nomination mostly on your word? Now, look what he's at! The colonel tells me Weldy holds out of every caucus the delegation has called on this Lacy investigation. Of course it's the old game, but I thought Weldy would be grateful enough to you not to stick out for a price."

The younger man tipped forward so that the front legs of his chair thumped the floor. "O, look here, Harry, Fred isn't looking for money!" he retorted testily.

"He isn't? He certainly isn't bucking us for glory, is he?"

"In this investigation business? I haven't heard much lately."

"Well, you knew we got him on the special committee to report on Lacy's resolution to look into what beat these civic purity bills, didn't you? Of course the two farmers on it are dead after the investigation, and the two city members, of course, are against it. That

puts it up to Weldy. Now, I got him on that committee to kill the affirmative report. I didn't even inquire how he stood—I supposed *your* man would always stand *right*. But he doesn't stand right, and what else can he want except a hold-up? He's a wise guy, that's what he is. He's got a cinch on us."

"I guess not—it doesn't look like Fred."

"It's a hold-up or else he's going to vote for the investigation of where the money went that beat the Lacy bills," retorted Stillman coolly, "and that last *would* raise hell up and down the state, wouldn't it?"

Arnold looked at the intricate mosaic of the stained glass window that screened the gold room from the street; he was trying to study the matter out; he had rather forgotten Fred Weldy the past month, along with everything else. "Fred's funny," he asserted, at length, "and the unions have been jumping on him about this bribery inquiry."

"Well, who's he taking orders from?" demanded Stillman. "What did these rat unions have to do with it except to vote for him?"

The other laughed.

The business agent [illegible]abor municipal administration went on with [illegible] hurriedness he always used when the time fo[illegible]ps was past. "He's a bad actor. He's handed us the double-cross. Personally, Fred's all right, but he's on the wrong lead here. But we can break him."

"Break him? You couldn't get Fred back into politics with a club, once he can get out of it!"

The business agent looked shrewdly worried.

"That's bad. You don't imagine he's coming any

baby play?—that he *will* favor the investigation? My God—no!"

"It's an even bet," murmured Arnold complacently. He was enjoying Stillman's perplexity—it was rarely one saw him at a loss.

"Well, we've got to get him. There's big men behind the track, Ham—the best people in the town here, socially, and all—and there's nobody wants any stink stirred about the killing of the Lacy bills. Now, you know that I'm responsible, Hammy. I took it from you that Fred was *straight*. Some of these people are asking me what sort of a dub we sent up there from your district. I come to you, Ham. This fellow's yours, and you'll have to handle him."

"Harry, I don't want to mix. I don't owe the track anything. I've been trying to support a brace of bookies out there for two weeks myself, and I think that lets me off."

"I've heard you went wild. Ain't you got more sense than to buck that crowd? Ham, this racing is fixed for the rubes and the cheap-john clerks and all these little screws and sawed-offs that think they can beat another man at his game. If you want to go on the turf, go right. Go inside and work out," the commissioner continued thoughtfully; "don't be handing money up to the professionals with the rest of the lambs—get inside and take it yourself."

"I just take a flyer now and then for the sport."

"Sport—nothing, it's business. Hammy, between you and me there's nothing so weak and foolish as the sport—he's just the sucker for the man with the long business head to play."

"Will you need five hundred? What kind of a stiff is he?" *Page 177.*

The younger man watched the brusk business agent tilting the white-robed bottle across the table; he heard it crash back in the ice, and said not a word. Stillman, the jollier, the man-about-town, the sponsor for the sporting men, defender of the open lid, did not drink, but he lit a fresh cigar.

"Business," he continued, "and that's why the races are run, the booze is sold and the houses flourish—some business man wants the money, and we develop the sport to feed into the mill. Well, I don't often open up this way, but I know you understand. Business—and that's why we've got to get Weldy. Ever talk with him? How much will he want?"

"Harry, you can't touch him."

"O, yes we can," the debonair man-about-town airily waved his cigar toward the other. "He's waiting for the offer. I know these stiffs in politics—he's holding out to stick us hard."

"Well, go to him, then."

"Yes. But the colonel and the boys at Sacramento are afraid of Weldy. He's pretty raw, and they don't know how to approach him. So they passed it back to me; and he's yours, Ham—he's yours."

"I pass him up."

The police commissioner had drawn a roll of new bills from his pocket. He counted them briskly. "Will you need five hundred? What kind of a stiff is he? He's got a house in Berkeley and a mortgage due, I hear."

Arnold sat upright from his indifferent lounging. "Harry," he muttered, "cut this out—he's my friend."

"That makes it better. Five hundred will get him.

It's more than was put up to kill the anti-track bills to begin with." Harry Stillman laughed. The people's representatives were always more or less a joke.

"Harry," said the other, "you're shoving a lot of work on me this winter. I put through that grand jury trick, and I stood for the registration, and—"

"Hammy, you're the safest man we've got—you have a serious way of being *strong* with people."

"Yes, and you think you've got me now. I suppose you'd railroad me to San Quentin through some of the push judges if I jumped the program, wouldn't you?"

The politician laughed debonairly. He never allowed the steel to show through the velvet.

"I've gone pretty deep," muttered the younger man. "It's rotten!"

"My boy," said the other, and his face had a patient seriousness, "no man can deal with the American people without becoming rotten. Some day I'm going to write a treatise on the way the people corrupt their politicians—the baneful effect of the business man on the boss; the cunning contrivances of the governed to prostitute the government."

Stillman smiled across the table, shoving the money to Arnold's hand; about him, after all, was the lovable wit, the assuring *camaraderie,* on which, in democracies, power is built; which stills alarms and scruples alike in minds less alert.

"Now, go after your man," he continued. "If he won't take the money, let's donate it to the Children's Hospital—I've already given them one thousand."

"Weldy won't touch it," mused Arnold, distantly absorbed.

"Flash it on him. If he don't—all right. It'll let you out, Ham—you'll have done your best. I'll bet you a hundred dollars he takes it."

"I'll take you." Arnold laughed mirthlessly. "Harry, you're a son-of-a-gun! You only look at life one way—don't you?" He picked up the roll of bills, smoothed their crinkly length and tucked them in his pocket. "I think I'll go on another drunk—I feel it coming."

"Cut that out," retorted Stillman soberly. "That's another thing you must leave to the rubes and seven-dollar clerks. If you have anything to do with liquor, sell it to the other fellow. Ham, I've got one rule of life that I never saw defeated—Always work from the inside *out!*"

The police commissioner accompanied the younger man to the bar-room and bade him a fraternizing farewell. Arnold strolled slowly up Market Street. The down-town tide to the theaters and cafés was just setting in at half-past seven. He went on until he found himself in Union Square, and sat restlessly down on one of the benches, staring into the dim west above the shrubbery which was lighted by the high arcs. Across the shining way came the clamor of the cable-cars, a murmur of street voices and noises indistinct, confused, but lending to the evening peace of the Square where, in the palms and acacias, the sparrows were asleep.

Arnold heard the twitter of a late bird in the bushes at his back. He took out the money and idly twisted it about his fingers.

"My friend!" he murmured; "they want me to buy my friend!"

A white shaft erected by the citizens of San Francisco to the memory of the soldiers and sailors who fought at the battle of Manila rises from the sward of Union Square. Upon the capital stands a winged Victory stretching a wreath and a trident to the sky.

About a clump of acacias near the young man came a bent figure, slowly feeling for the path with a cane. Tap-a-tap sounded the walking stick and then it stopped. The Captain straightened himself, his hand to his imperial, his face lighted with wistful expectancy, his half-blinded eyes straining to see the monument against the dying light of the west.

The younger man's gaze followed. The veteran's right hand rose slowly to the brim of his slouch hat. Then his eyes went to the ground, the cane tapped on along the path. But at the pavement he looked back, and again Arnold saw his slow salute; his eyes on the marble shaft, on the bronze Victory rising immutable, serene, triumphant, above the brawling town.

CHAPTER XI

Arnold was taking his usual saunter along Market Street at noon, having risen earlier than was his custom. On the "sunny side the Slot" he met Sammy Jarbo, who rehearsed some gossip from over the hill. But Arnold had only a distant interest in Washington Street, it appeared, though he asked of everybody, and particularly if the Captain had heard any news from the army department headquarters. Being assured that no word had reached the father, he relapsed into silence, walking along with his hand on Sammy's shoulder, through the California morning.

Sammy and he had been as brothers by reason of the old days when they were "broke" together; and besides, it is something to have a friend to walk with through such weather. They wandered as far as the city hall plaza, and then Sammy had to depart for his afternoon wagon deliveries. He gave his friend a last troubled look; Arnold was as always, well-dressed, immaculately groomed and polished, but his face held a pallor that had crept above its swarthiness, his mobile mouth twitched more than it was wont in other days.

"Hammy," muttered his friend, "why don't you get through with it? Don't let a girl break you up like this —it's pretty tough to be turned down cold, but come out of it."

Arnold smiled kindly on him. Between these two there had been that fellowship which is the chief virtue of men, and of which women know nothing; and when he chose to close his heart, Sammy could find the way, if it was to be found. But he only smiled benignantly now and gripped Sammy's shoulder tighter. "Little man, I know you mean it!" was his only word.

"Women," continued Mr. Jarbo; "they've been breaking up things for five thousand years, ain't they?" He sighed. "'Uncertain, coy and hard to please'—didn't those knights of old have it handed to them same as we?"

Arnold's smile deepened. "I've wanted to tell you something. Sammy, that lame girl loves you."

"Eh?" stuttered the poet, "what are you at?"

"Mary Mellody. She's fine and she's up against a hard game. Life's a tough old proposition to a girl like her, lame, cut off—not a soul in the world who cares. And she loves you. I tell you, that's all that's worth while—to have some woman believe you're better than you are."

"And it seems that to you they're just an adventure—"

"Don't talk about me. With me the adventure's done. Women have been fair weather friends with me, but when the dark days came—they always quit me then. All except—" he broke off with his old impersonal humor. "I've analyzed the matter, Sammy. I've made a study of failure, I've been after the philosophy of it; I've worked out its principles, and after while, when the demonstration is done, if any man wants to go to the devil I can give him an exact formula."

"You're an awful fool," sighed Sammy, "and I give you up."

"That's best." The other gripped the poet's arm. "But you—you take your little old case of heart failure and swing in hard. You marry Mary and live, boy. That's one thing I want before—" he broke again and stared over his friend's head. "Well, don't bother about me—things don't hurt me. The world can uppercut me pretty hard, and I'll smile."

The poet's eyes were troubled. "I wish you'd break with all this. O, Hammy, if we could all be like we were once—just young and laughing together over some fool thing! Seems like up on the hill they're all waiting for you—Granny and the kiddies and that old soldier—seems as if we all believed in you. Up there you're no crook, like the papers call you."

He left his friend staring at a fleck of blue above the town where the trades fog broke. In the afternoon the wine-like sunshine came and Arnold idled along streets bulging with traffic and in cafés agog with pleasure. And at three o'clock he was in Abrams' pool-room, nervously fingering the bribe money in his vest pocket. He had had a drink or two, and the gamblers' fever was on him, a blind resurgence. He remembered that it was the day of the Narcissus Stakes, and he had been given a "hunch" on Bianca—not as straight as the plot that landed Corsair with the big money but—well it was worth a twenty, surely?

The pool-room was a noisome place with the stink of unwashed men, bare of floor, dim-lit from grimy windows. Benches were along two sides of the basement on which the wrecks of the racing "dope" loafed,

watching the others who had not yet come to the street, as they studied the blackboards on which the horses were posted. A partition ran along one end of the room, enclosing the telephones and paraphernalia of the pool-room men, and before this space was a high counter—so high that a tall man could not see over the top—and the dope gamblers, after they had made their choice, were compelled to reach their money over their heads to the clerks, who then bawled the bet to the ticket writers, and passed the pasteboards back to the customers. The room was filling now, with a slow interjection of new life among the dreary habitués, for it was nearly the time of the first race at Emeryville track. The reek of tobacco and whisky was in the air.

As the minute of the start approached, the shuffling crowd thickened below the high, board counter and the husky-throated, stunted clerks bawled louder, while the money dribbled up to their hands. The patrons had one common facial characteristic—a weak show of wisdom; they would nod their heads and mutter and shove, cunningly penciling their racing forms and newspapers. The protruding lips, watery eyes, weak chins above grimy, collarless shirts, the sordid front of the beaten people all were there; and among these off-scourings were small clerks, dray-men, mechanics at their nooning, high-school boys, laborers, cigarette-sucking weaklings—every cheap class of the town poured its pitiful earnings into the coffers of the rich men behind the races, into the pockets of the gamblers who ruled the city, who used the newspapers to advertise their business and glorify their deeds in the

sporting columns, the courts to protect it, and the government to give it dignity.

Arnold threaded the dull crowd and placed twenty dollars on Bianca; he was coming out, ascending the stairs, glad to be rid of the foulness, when some one cried out by his side. Eddie Ledyard of the shoe house was pointing at the green ticket in his hand. The boy had at first started, ashamed to be seen in the place, but here was Arnold, a man accustomed about town to better company than himself.

"What's your play, Ham?" cried Eddie. "They're —they're off in the first!"

"Nothing," said the other carelessly. "Just a piker's bit with me—Bianca."

Eddie looked shrewdly at him. What was up, Ham playing the pools? And *was* it Bianca? The racing dope makes the best of friends suspicious; maybe there was another big *coup* on like that of Corsair? The youthful clerk greedily peered at Arnold's ticket. "Bianca," repeated his friend; "Bianca, Eddie—seven to one."

"Are you sure?" whispered the shoe clerk. "Ham, I'm done for this week—I flew wide on Presidenté, and it hurt." His voice broke. "It's something fierce, ain't it?"

Arnold eyed Ledyard narrowly. The boyish fellow jerked uneasily, as though his collar was too tight; he bit his fingers, staring at the entries and the odds posted back of the sing-songing clerks. But Ledyard's queerness was nothing unusual; Arnold had seen the racing madness every day on the street and at the track—only Eddie was his old high-school pal.

"Bianca," muttered Ledyard. "You got it straight, Ham? *Can't* she lose?"

"Couldn't lose if she was tied in the stable," retorted the other. "But, Eddie, you cut this out."

"I know—I know! But Bianca—" his gaze was dreamy and afar, and now one could see the tired lines about the eyes. "I got to get back somehow, Ham. I was going to plunge on that Chatom entry—Edith M, Watt Chatom's filly—but now I remember a month ago, you figured on Bianca for the Narcissus."

"Yes," Ham's voice was gentler now. "But, Eddie, it's no place for a straight lad like you in this thieves' game. You're going high, they tell me."

The lad was still dreaming. "I'm all right. You're a good friend of mine, Ham—you wouldn't put me wrong. We've always thought a lot of you ever since the old Taylor Street days. Stella's home now, and we've got a chafing-dish and some new opera stuff. Say, Ham," Eddie's eyes brightened with his old blithesomeness, an idea growing bigger in him, "come up to-night. Let's cut out the route and make it a party—the chafing-dish and the whole bunch around you at the piano! Stella'd ask some nice girls."

The two young men looked curiously at each other; Arnold spoke first, and with a grave regret. "Eddie, I've drifted pretty far—I haven't seen the inside of any man's home for seven years. I'd better not mix with your sister's sort of girls. There's an arc-light sizzling in my brain, and that wouldn't be right up at your mother's."

The clerk laughed again less lightly. He hadn't been about the flat with Stella a great many evenings him-

self this winter. But it was "home"—where the soft lights burn that keep clean the souls of men.

"I know" he murmured. "The game gets you hard, doesn't it? San Francisco! Sometimes I wonder where all the men and women end—the good-hearted lads we've met, and the girls, after all, so kind and merry. There's Nel—why can't a man do something for her? If there were some way of untangling it all and beginning again."

"Yes," answered the other; "if there were!"

"Some day you help her," said Eddie. "You know how to be friends to every one, Hammy. When the trouble days come for Nel, you help her—she won't let me be her friend."

Arnold smiled. The girl had kept her promise then!

The boyish fellow did not know. He was musing; sometimes he had debated whether he should ask Hammy Arnold of "down-town," of his other life and circle of friends, to meet Stella and his mother.

Eddie was troubled by it now; it seemed as they stood in the sunlight, that the way back to the better world was as fair and open to his friend as to himself. Stella, home, his mother, the laughing faces and the homekeeping hearts—an amplitude of all he knew was clean and fine, honoring good and keeping faith in men as they struggled, was about them. Yes, one could go back the way to the soft home glows that keep clean the souls of men.

"If you'd come!" Eddie muttered. "You see, mother never quite believes all that's said about you, Hammy—she *can't*. She always remembers how you sang *Abide With Me,* at Jimmy King's funeral. It was eight

years ago and she never can forget we were all boys together."

The other smiled: "Tell her I thank her, won't you, Eddie? But I—can't." He waved a cheery farewell. When he had gone the clerk turned on the pool-room steps, staring at the sanded floor below, the sunlit street above. "Chatom's filly—or Bianca? My God, if I could get it straight!" he added dully. "If only I knew! But Ham said Bianca in the fourth."

Arnold idled in Billy Rice's hang-out for small theatrical people—cheap vaudevillists, stage-hands, press agents and advance men out of a job—listening to the chaff, irresolute as to how he should spend the afternoon. Then, in front of the Orpheum, he met a man who was reputed to have depleted the racing books of eighty thousand dollars during the meet—the organizer of the Corsair clique and close up at the track and in the paddock gossip.

"Hello, Slive," said Arnold. "Why aren't you across the bay?"

"I'm taking care of the end here—we're crowding on all we can before the price drops."

"The Narcissus? Behind Bianca, eh?"

The immaculate gambler started. "Bianca?" He bent to the other. "Aren't you wise to this? Chatom's youngster—they can't beat her!" He drew cunningly closer at Arnold's unmoved face. "Look at the betting—from fifteen-to-one it's come to sixes, and before the flag drops it'll be three. Bianca—nothing! The race is in Chatom's pocket. I thought you were wise."

Arnold fingered the rest of the bribe money in his

pocket. He had placed twenty dollars of it on the losing horse; now he drew a handful of bills and gave it to the other. "Stick two hundred on at any price you can get."

"Six is the best. You'll lose fourteen hundred by not taking the odds that ran last night—we simply couldn't keep this quiet. All right—two hundred on Edith M." He folded the money and gave a knowing look. "Say, that mare carries a swell name, doesn't she? Named for Watt Chatom's sister, ain't she?"

"Yes." For an instant Ham resented Edith's name on the tipster's lips, the flicker of a flame of respect that died away. After all, what was she? Merely the fine gold of the pyramid's point, whose base was builded in the nameless evil of the city; the enriching soil in which she bloomed an exquisite flower, was but the rotted lives of other flowers as fair. He indifferently recalled the two symbols, while his eyes were on the racing chart on the theater wall, its marginal advertisements of the lotteries, the clairvoyants, the pawnbrokers and the liquor dealers. "Yes, Edith M—in the Narcissus."

CHAPTER XII

Arnold met Fred Weldy by appointment after the matinée, and took him to a four-bit French dinner on Stockton Street where an indifferent stringed orchestra played; a nondescript *table d' hote* given over largely to prosperous clerks, heads of store departments, family parties—a café with a suggestion of Gallic smartness but tamely respectable, where one found a trio of rosy-faced stenographers, middle-aged married women, spinsters and female bookkeepers who could come here unattended and depart to the plays after their cognac, with a buzzing sense of the luxurious unimportance of things.

"Kind of peaceful," Fred Weldy said, as he sat back after the roast chicken and the sprouts, crop-full and pleased. Arnold had been wittily inclined, drolly giving forth the most astonishing theories on social evolution and the philosophical aspect of industrialism, matters on which Weldy loved to argue with a prosy but German thoroughness.

When they reached the coffee the legislator was replete with satisfaction. "Old man, it's the best, comfortablest time I've had since we had our big dinner together at the Fiore d' Italia, way last fall when I concluded I'd go into politics. Lord, what a fool I was! Here I've been bullyragged and hauled about and asked questions on a hundred things I didn't dream of. What

the devil do I know about taxing the railroads on their earning capacity and all that?"

Arnold laughed cheerily. "Well, you certainly are coming in for a lot of talk on this special committee, aren't you?"

"The whole city delegation is wild at me," pursued Fred dismally, "and the railroad lobby threatens me, and the members tell me if I vote to investigate the bribery scandals, they'll beat the safety-coupler bill the labor people want. And yet the unions are dead for the inquiry."

"Fred, the unions don't amount to a tinker's damn! The boss and Stillman control the leaders—and back of the boss is Chatom and the railroad. So you see all this yawp about bucking the organization, and delivering the people from the corporation cinch, and reform, and all that stuff, goes right round in a circle. Everybody is traded in right. Still, the big men inside are a little bit surprised at you."

"O, sure! I know now what I was elected for! The push wouldn't have got behind me if they hadn't thought I was all right."

"And now you're putting me in a funny fix, Fred—you know I stood for you. I said the word in the back room of the Maplewood that gave you the nomination."

The statesman stirred restlessly. "Sure—sure! Ham, you're going to plague me, too, ain't you? It's getting savage. Why, they've even gone to my wife—somebody did—and the police captain has been at Unc' Pop's a dozen times of late just talking around about his side door, and if women come in there—just think—at Unc' Pop's!"

"Fred, I'm glad you see it. It's how the system works."

"But what's the racing bribery got to do with Unc' Pop? Women?—why if they want to get after women drinking, why don't they raid some of these big downtown joints?" Weldy's indignation overflowed, and Arnold laughed his amusement. Fred never would learn; he was always the boy.

"And the Central Security Company holds a mortgage on your home for two thousand dollars, doesn't it?"

Weldy turned on him, staring with excitement. "What—what—how'd you know?"

"Well, don't attract every one's attention. Come, let's get out. Only—" Arnold's grave voice came to the legislator's ear—"I wanted to have you see the knives at your back, Fred. I'm trying to put you wise."

The assemblyman was dazed when they reached the sidewalk; he put his hand through his friend's arm. Suddenly it seemed that the Burgundy they had drunk had made him dizzy. "I'm crazy in the head," he muttered apathetically; "kind-a crazy in the head."

They walked through Union Square to the bar of a little corner grocery on Bush Street. Weldy drank whisky feverishly; he seemed trying to widen his brain to an avalanche of new thoughts, doubts, fears. "My business is running down," he muttered. "I want-a quit—I can't afford this legislature game. I'm building a new house, Ham, a new house—and we—and we—" he meandered off unintelligibly, gulping his whisky and staring at the mirrors.

Arnold quietly allowed him drink and meditation to

the full; and with drink and thought he weakened pitiably. His tongue loosened, he went on with a garrulous recounting of his business troubles; it was a critical time for him—he was a partner in the job-printing office, and he had not yet paid up his share of the investing capital; living was high, it took a lot for Lillie and the babies and for his mother's keep, and he didn't know—he ought to be home looking after things, and not in this fool legislature.

They went to the quiet back room of another saloon, had a drink, and then Arnold doggedly fired another shot at him. "Let's see, the Londale Liquor Company is carrying Unc' Pop on its books for fifteen hundred dollars, isn't it?"

Fred stared at him again with amazement. He didn't know—he supposed so—he couldn't see how Ham knew all these things and what they had to do with the case, and yet?—well, of course the wholesaler had to "stand in"—sure, that was it—he *could* see!

"They figure on all these things," Ham continued patiently, and then he fired the last shot. "Fred, your shop had the contract for a great big lot of the printing for the Street Railway Company last year, didn't it?"

"Yes, we dropped everything else for that. It's a big item."

"And you want it again, don't you?"

"Why—why—sure, we've been figuring on it. We loaded up on a lot of paper stock thinking of their requirements. We're going to bid sharp, for we need that business pretty bad."

"Well, if you stand right, you can get it—I *know*

you can! There's a lot of stuff can come your way, Fred, if you're wise."

The assemblyman was in doubt, then slowly he saw the matter. He smil sadly on his friend. "I suppose it's up to me to vote against the investigation, ain't it? Throw down my union and all the decent people for the gamblers' ring, ain't it? God's sake, Ham, I thought I was going there to be square!" He laughed briefly. "But I'm getting in bad—I'm beginning to need money, Ham."

"Money?" Arnold's voice was softly alert; he leaned across the table.

"O, well, I meant in general." Weldy's face reddened. "I meant I was getting hard up, with the new house and all!"

"I know. Fred, there's plenty of money around—it's easy enough to get. And why not? What's the use of stirring this rottenness up? Nobody wants it except women and a few farmers and some dinky Methodist and Baptist brothers who haven't drag enough to scare a fly off your hat. The big churches, such as Chatom attends, don't want it. They never attack anything there, they're too busy praising God. They're afraid He'll forget His business if they don't sing anthems and swing candlesticks and tell Him how good He is."

"O, I don't know—I don't know," protested the printer. "I don't go to church, but I always thought truth and justice got ahead somehow."

"Truth and justice," retorted Ham, with sermonizing seriousness, "always meet with reward if they're sufficiently advertised—and they don't hurt business. Otherwise there's not much demand for the goods."

"O, I don't know;" Weldy was troubled and confused. "There's Christ and what He taught."

"Christ's out on the street," Arnold murmured. "The wise people higher up couldn't do business with Him around."

They had gone to the pavement, Weldy seeking refuge in self pity. "We got-a hold that contract—my partner's no hustler, Ham," he pleaded. "O, we just got-a hold that printing—the shop's running down." And in the dark Arnold swung on him with a sudden, vicious snap.

"Well, how is it, Fred?" he whispered. "Do you need money?"

"Money? God's sake—what're you talking money for?" Fred's voice, too, was in a whisper; he tried to assume a trembling indignation, but the quiver in his tone was not of anger.

"Do you need a loan?"

"A man can always use money. But you—don't you *think*—"

Arnold's hand went to Fred's in the dark. The assemblyman felt the crinkle of bills crushed in his fingers. He backed off, coughing weakly to hide his confusion. "I got-a go to Unc' Pop's. Yes, sir—Unc' Pop's. God's sake, Ham—Unc' Pop's!"

The briber followed him a few steps in the deserted street. "Two hundred and fifty," he whispered; "and two-fifty more coming, Fred."

"Sure—sure!" murmured the legislator, laughing foolishly. "It's getting late, ain't it? Sure—sure!"

Arnold watched him go hurriedly up the hill. His friend was strangely bent and old, it appeared, or it

may have been the flicker of the arc-lights on him. The other man lit a cigarette and sauntered leisurely down-town. "I got him," he murmured apathetically. "But what chance did he have? It's like a wolf-pack hunting—what chance did he have? The whole town was on his back—the wolf town. What chance did he have?"

And the fancy of himself leading a pack of gray wolves, hunting down a wounded animal, dragging it to the snow, throttling it as its struggles weakened, moodily fascinated him. Then a trouble grew on him that he could view the matter so apathetically. But he dulled this: "Why should I be sorry? It's wolf eat wolf in this game—every man for himself. Fred's of age, he knows where he's going."

Yet the memory of his big bluff friend, uncertain, feeling this way and that for help, dumbly hurt, and then dragged down by the gray wolves of the city, haunted Arnold. "I led them," he murmured. "I'm the outlaw, but I joined the pack to pull Fred down." He was revolving the matter, still impersonally, viewing his other self from afar, when a newsboy thrust a sporting extra of a paper in his hand: "Winner'n Narcissus! Extra!" he caroled.

Watt Chatom's filly, Edith M, had beaten Bianca easily in the fourth race.

"Eleven hundred to the good," murmured Arnold, but his winning gave him no pleasure. He was surfeited with the track, sleepless with ill-reckoned nights. Ferreri had told him that he "looked shot to pieces," and he knew to-night that drinking had failed to drive the pricking devils from his brain. "I ought to get

away a week or two," he mused; and his fancies went back to the brown, sun-beaten ranges along the Tuolumne, where he had been a boy, and then the green, steaming jungles of Mindanao and Samar, where he and Larry Calhoun had been bunkies. He wondered now, with a singular melancholy sentiment, of their peace. And then the North rose, the giant redwoods spanning rocky gorges sunless and still. Above, the trails led to the brushy ridges and piney slopes, the country-up-in-back where once, for four weeks, he had been happy, it seemed; where he had been able to make a simple country girl smile, and watch her eyes brighten at his coming.

"But I didn't love her," he murmured slowly. "That's dead in me. It's good the little girl found it out—it's better so—much better!"

But the stinging imps bothered his head, and going to the Oriental, he had three drinks. Then because the place was quiet, and he could not tolerate silence any longer, he went to the street, seeking something to make him forget.

Grant Avenue was emptying itself at half-past nine; the impossible street of fakirs and proclaimers of revolutions and millenniums was losing its motley life, but over one last dissolving group came the splendor of a woman's voice.

Again he saw her, the black robe swaying, the astonishing appeal of the serene face under the torch, the light bronzing the huddled men before her. A mordant desire to bait her further came, for to-night his soul seemed dead, rolling in its abyss. He had had a note from her weeks ago, inclosing a check for one

hundred and sixty-five dollars. She had been forced to accept his statement of the amount lost. He had seen her twice since on her rostrum, giving her little thought. After all, she was but a superior fakir of this town of fakirs. Unreal, Romanesque, impossible, she was but one of San Francisco's down-town figures that defied placing. Watching her, he drew a sense of weariness from her utterance; saw it, too, in the impassive men who listened. He was below her stand when she looked down at the conclusion. A color touched her cheeks—a moment's confusion at his speech.

"How's the harvest? I take it they reject your pearls?"

"Wise, hopeless faces—souls impotent, asleep. It's a hard town, isn't it?"

She gathered her robe to go, while a negro removed the stand, and with a jesting commonplace Arnold was by her side, dropping his argot of the street. She felt his indifferent insolence of mood; an intellectual fencing, but in mutual understanding, possessed both. But she became serene, her clear practicality came out in their rambling talk, and presently his corroding tension lessened—she could laugh, be human, of the world, could she?

But this lashed his evil humor, a reckless whim seized him. "Where are you going?" he asked.

"I haven't an idea! I walk a deal at night before I go to the hotel."

A thought came to him that she was keenly enjoying the respite. Well, he would try out this spiritual sufficing of hers, this dilettanté offering of soul to his

mocking world. It was a matter of indifference what she thought of him. He had never been serious with women; least of all with serious women, few though they were in his life. "Suppose we go somewhere and talk," he said. "To the Belvedere."

"Very well."

"The Belvedere?" He stared at her.

"The concert hall—let's go. I've never seen it."

He thought at first she was having fun at his expense, but beyond her frank pleasantness, she was intent enough. He guessed slowly at her view of the matter—she would be, as always, superiorly above it, beyond contamination, or even discomfort, in her power of detachment from the world's grossness. None of this mattered—the soul moved untouched through all forms and phases of consciousness, and neither evil nor suffering could lessen it.

Arnold glanced up the street in some irresolution. But she was pleasantly human, supremely sure of herself.

"Well," he went on, "won't you be rather conspicuous in that rig?" He looked at the classic robe, the mortar-board cap on her dark hair. "You see, the Belvedere—"

"I don't mind—I'm used to the multitude, and its stares."

"Well—" The young man looked again in some consternation up the brilliant street. Already a trio of his cronies had noted them. "You see—"

"*You* don't mind, do you?" she began, watching his face. He had a sense of her amusement at his hesitation.

"Well, the Belvedere—it's pretty swift—for a preacher!"

"Why, nothing can harm one, can it?"

"But you're religious. Won't people—your friends—church—"

"I haven't a friend in San Francisco—hardly one in America. I am alone, untrammeled—free to do exactly as I wish on all occasions."

She had already led the way. Arnold went along in some amazed doubt of himself.

Take her to the Belvedere?—in that rig? She was a woman who would have won the street's eye in the gown of a fishwife, a cloak, a shawl—she would have irradiated distinction from anything. And she now turned in to the Belvedere Music Hall at his side, in that black filmy silk, enveloping her from chin to toe, relieved nowhere save by a tiny gold cross at her throat, and on her head that unusual cap shading her face, a classic face that stirred the crowd in the hall, the clerks, touts, jockeys, dope fiends, bar-habitués, street politicians and riffraff with their women, until a whispering comment buzzed after her entry.

Arnold tried to look expressionless as he followed her and the shifty-footed usher up the aisle. They all knew him at the Belvedere, the former prize-fighters who acted as stewards and announcers, the barkeepers, the politician proprietors and their followers—Arnold caught the amazed gasp from some of them—and they, for the greater part, knew her. Grace Wayne was a figure too challenging in the downtown life for any idler to leave unremarked, for any cigar-store philosopher to omit from his summing up

of the Street. Arnold felt like a captive bound to the chariot wheels of some priestess in a barbaric triumph.

The spacious auditorium, gorgeous with lights under a delicately pink dome starred as a firmament, was well filled. The curtain before the stage was a jumble of advertisements, among which was that of a new march-song that the orchestra was just concluding—a stirring two-step by W. Walters, which all the town was humming. A brass rail down the hall divided the place reserved for women and their escorts from the section where the men drank and smoked at the little tables. A droning murmur of voices rose, the inimitable jargon of the track and prize-ring, the cigar stores and the Street.

The two proprietors who were promoters of the great monthly prize-ring contests and controllers of the vote in the district went about joshing their patrons with impartial urbanity—it was "Jimmie," or "Billy," or "the Kid," or "this guy"—everywhere the youthful, happy-go-lucky, alluringly cheerful, roystering, cosmopolitan spirit of Old San Francisco, which would gild the blackest sin with the charm of humanness.

Every one was good-natured; the waiters laughingly struggled through groups with their trays; the women at the tables bantered them, the busy stewards circulated here and there—everywhere a humming cordiality in speech and manner, the most amicable forbearance and happy adjustment with careless tact and native grace. When the curtain shot up, the orchestra broke to a rollicking dance. Two girls in black jeweled velvet skirts, low-cut bodices and with immense plumed hats, bright-eyed, smiling, humorously *en rapport* with

the audience, sang a song of the day, kicked their silken-clad legs with a merry adieu, and then were hurried into an encore in the words of which the spectators joined joyously, while the Hungarian orchestra leader turned with a bow and smile to beat the time for the volunteers.

Arnold and his companion sat at a table near the wall. Save for their nearer neighbors, they were now unobserved. He watched the woman's face; it was radiant with interest, speculation, humor at the careless spirit about her. "Apollinaris," she nodded to her host when the waiter approached.

"A bottle and two glasses," said Arnold, and then to her: "May I smoke?"

"Why, of course."

The young man watched her coloring under the gloss of her black hair and cap, the large nose, the shrewd mouth, the indistinguishable depths of her eyes; healthily big, firm of mold, the shoulders square, the arms and throat full, she seemed very human, and not at all the mystic.

"A preacher?" he murmured, "not on my life! Now, what's *her* graft underneath that classy little cap?"

Then he saw Louis Ferreri and Bernice Murasky at a table some distance away. The Jewess' eyes were round with astonishment; she couldn't watch the vaudeville, for her study of this new "find" of Arnold's.

Ferreri took the shop-girl often to the great cafés and down-town resorts because her brilliance fed his pride, filled his vacant mind in its easy moments. She could dress well, somehow, and at Zinkand's or the

Poodle Dog, would talk volubly, gesticulate eagerly and enjoy herself so ingenuously that they would always attract attention, and Ferreri, sitting back behind the chafing-dish—"lobster Newburg," or "en casserole" dishes which she would order with an air of familiar indifference, with the champagne—would be vastly flattered by the occasion. Bernice Murasky "had all the swell Yits along Pacific Avenue beaten a block," to his way of thinking; all she needed was money to "make a front in any class."

At times the slot-machine man thought he would like to marry Bernice if she wasn't so terribly sarcastic.

Miss Murasky made a petulant *moue* when she saw Hammy Arnold looking at her. "What kind of woman has he got *now?*" she whispered to Ferreri, who was rubbing his tiger's head diamond, debating whether he shouldn't exchange it for the forget-me-not.

Arnold's urbanity was now not disturbed at the stir his entrance had created. He'd give O'Farrell Street something else to buzz about with his name, besides graft talk and spectacular sprees and plunging on the races—the Belvedere had certainly never entertained a woman such as he had brought there!

Grace Wayne's gloved hand attracted his attention across the table. "Why, this isn't so bad," she said demurely. "Not as I thought."

"It'll liven up after midnight. These show girls will sell drinks down-stairs and there'll be a run for your money if you care to have it."

"I've seen much worse—the dance-halls of Cape Colony and the East End music halls. This is well

dressed—a glass of [illegible] and some silly music, it seems."

"You're rather a student of the world," he answered, and looked at her in some new light. A sort of dainty humanness had grown out of her usual impersonality of utterance; he gathered that she was not all the mystic. "I supposed you would find all this beyond the pale."

"When one has made sure of one's own serenity one can see best—one can move untouched through any experiences of the lower plane."

"How does that help?"

"Help?" she asked at his abruptness.

"I was thinking of the rest—down here. Your way is good—for you. But we're hammering out something else than spiritual consciousness." He smiled coolly. "I told you once you'd failed in your new thought—you have."

"I have not," she retorted steadily, gravely. "I've taught the newer interpretation. Old faiths, old forms are passing, and out of the spiritual unrest there is coming the recognition of the power in each soul—it can accept, it can move untouched, and in the end rejoin the eternal and ever-flowing spirit of God."

He studied her long in the measure of the dance music, smiled, and she saw a trace of pity. To him she was the apotheosis of the rant of the city of fakirs. Beyond that—nothing.

"My soul?" he muttered. "Give me a sign that I have one." But through his ironical aloofness came a feeling that she was weaving invisible cords, checking

him, and that he was too conscious of her physical magnetism, and he did not wish to be held or attracted.

"You're changed," she said, intently watching him. "You've gone back since I saw you. A soul struggling, but you refuse to awaken."

His lips had a slur of contempt which she could not guess. "I am," he answered, "just what I wish to be —a thief, a liar."

"Go on," she answered; "lie to yourself—whip yourself—" Her eyes grew wide, he was restless beneath their mystery.

"And you—" he added—"a mummer—a talker of words that mean nothing. If I wanted a God it would be the old God and not a cloud of light into which I was to be returned, a mere aura of consciousness floating through existences. I would want to go back to the old God and cry out that I was beaten and down, and say: 'Help me!'"

Her look on him had a dispassionate sweetness defying analysis. "You have suffered," she whispered. "O, you have come far!" And her clear gaze continued. "You have all the power within you—you are supreme—you can rise above all this brawling—that is my faith for you." She went on with a swift impulse: "I tell you, this is not *you!*"

He tried to evade her with indifference, the jesting that was ever his shield. "Well, and then what—what of it all?"

The orchestra broke to a smart fantasy, the hall darkened, a curtain rose, showing a white screen. From the gallery came the snap of a moving picture machine, the hiss of the carbon. Arnold could see his

companion's face, hurt, in a sort of proud patience, regarding him. He was restless beneath the sense of power she gave, and had turned from her to the green light pervading the room, when a man leaned across and touched his arm.

"Ham, is that you?"

It was Hendricks, of the *Call*.

"Hello, Ben; yes."

"You'd better come. A note was left for you—a note"—the newspaper man bent down with a queer smile—"the police have it."

"A note?"

"Eddie Ledyard left it to you—he killed himself half an hour ago."

Miss Wayne felt the man by her strain in his seat; his elbow went against her arm with a shove that put it off the table.

"It's bad," the *Call* man went on. "The races broke him—maybe he's short in his accounts. You'd better come."

Arnold swung out of his chair. "His mother—his sister—" he muttered. "Benny, break this story, can't you? Can't you kill it in the local room?"

"Couldn't be done. But we won't flash the racing business in it—it isn't policy just now—we can't afford to stir talk on the track."

The other did not hear his words. He was slipping down the aisle to the door, past the stilled crowds watching the moving pictures. Over his head the biograph snapped and sizzled—it seemed that the arc was in his brain; he reeled against the doorkeeper and then to the pavement.

"Where?" he whispered—he did not notice that the woman was at Benny's side—"where?"

"Stillman's—in the gold room. Kennedy's got the note."

The young man turned and ran the two blocks to the Maplewood saloon. In the bar-room there was no unusual group, only a policeman at the door leading to the rear, and a white-aproned "mixer" peering past him into the passage. The officer lowered his arm, then raised it so that Arnold dodged under. Before the door of the gold room, a captain of police and another patrolman were listening to an explanation from Fergy, the head bar-keeper, and a reporter stood with arms extended, hands on his hips, looking quietly in the small room.

Captain Kennedy stepped back. "Jack—is that you? —say, Jack, here—"

But Arnold was past them. A revolver was on the table. On the leather top of the broad seat that ran about the room under the polished panels of white birch and inlaid gold, lay the suicide. Nella Free had one arm under his sunny head. She was wiping spattered blood from his cheek and from the lashes of his wide-open eyes. Blood was on the floor, the seat, the wondrous wooden panels, the girl's gloves and the lace of her waist.

Arnold ran around her with a cry and knelt by her side, reaching his hand under Eddie's coat, dragging his limp head nearer to stare in his eyes.

"Yes, he's gone," he said, with a sort of nonchalance; "he's gone."

Nella broke into sobs as she continued to sponge the

dead boy's face. Arnold dragged the body nearer, so that it was as if the man and woman were struggling over it with monosyllabic protests. The police captain touched the young man's arm. "Here, here—" he said—"you'd better take *her* away—Stillman's girl—ain't it? Ham, take her away."

"Never mind," retorted Arnold, "he's gone—Eddie's gone."

Then he put his arm upon Nella's shoulder. "Don't cry, Kid, don't you cry!"

There was a stir at the door. Hendricks and Miss Wayne appeared. The latter came to the group by the seat—the dead boy, the girl wiping his cheek, Arnold and the police captain.

Captain Kennedy again touched Arnold's shoulder. "Here," he muttered.

The young man took the crumpled note which had been found on the table. His name was on the back in the boyish scrawl he had known since his high-school days. Within was written:

"Hammy, you said Bianca in the fourth."

Another stir at the door. The coroner's assistants had arrived. The gold room filled, a buzz of voices raised.

Arnold turned listlessly away; he wiped the blood from his hands on the table top and then, seeing the smear, rubbed it out with his sleeve.

"Hammy, get her away—Cri's sake—get her away!"

Arnold turned as the officer plucked his coat. He went to Nella and lifted her hand which held the stained wet handkerchief. "Come on, Nel!"

She shook herself free, and he turned about to meet

Miss Wayne. "Help me," he muttered, "help me, won't you?"

She stooped to lift the girl, turning her face to the door. Arnold took the other arm and they led her out and through the corridor to the side door of the Maplewood, and then to the street. The three went past the police patrol at the curb, the little curious throng. The street was ablaze with lights, the after-theater crowds streaming on to the cafés, the flare of the radiant doors open here, there, everywhere.

By one window which revealed a sea of white napery, shining plate and silver, each table illumined with carnations around which little parties were forming, the three paused.

Nella rubbed the red splashes from her white gloves with a handkerchief.

"I kept him away from me—just as you said—" she retorted on the man—"but it was we that killed him—you said Bianca in the fourth!"

Arnold nodded.

"You said Bianca—in the fourth," repeated the girl.

Miss Wayne glanced from one to the other. They were both looking at the blood on their hands.

CHAPTER XIII

They went along a little way, the girl dulled and sullen, and the young man heeding nothing of the street people and the tumult. Miss Wayne stopped again presently, and said: "You'd better wash this off somewhere—it looks bad, and then—hadn't you better go home?"

She looked at Nella, and the girl laughed feebly, drawing the veil below her chin. *"Home?* I want a drink. Let's go in Skelly's—I feel like I was going to pieces. Do I look white—am I?"

Arnold took her arm and turned to the side entrance of the café. When the three were in the private box, Nella threw back the veil and rubbed her cheeks with a piece of chamois. "Do I look pale?—am I?"

She stared across the little table at the man who looked back at her.

"Now, don't cry!" he muttered. "For God's sake, Nel—don't!"

"No," she retorted; "you're the one it's hurting so. We killed him, Hammy."

"Not you," he answered. "I got him in this business long ago—yes, I killed him. But you were with him, Nel—tell me."

"There's not much." The girl's eyes went from Arnold to the woman by his side in apathetic qu.stioning of her confidence. "I was in Harry's place to-

night with another girl, and Eddie came in through the ball-room and saw us in a box. After Myrtle had gone, he came to me. He looked terrible, and after while he told me everything. He'd lost eight hundred dollars on the Narcissus—and it wasn't his."

Arnold stirred restlessly, but his eyes did not leave her face. "Go on!" he muttered.

"O, that's just all!" the girl cried. "He didn't blame any one—he just said he was a fool. And he wanted to get away anywhere with me—*me!* I laughed, of course, and wouldn't, and I tried to cheer him up—and then, when I left him for a minute, he did it."

"Yes," the young man murmured, "and I might have helped him, and I didn't. I might have saved him, and I didn't!"

"Yes, you might." The girl turned to look out above the curtains to the hurrying street. "O, God, who cares? We just smashed him—that's all. He was kind of a boy and foolish over me, and he thought you were his best friend. And we just laughed and smashed him. O, God, sometimes I want to quit it all!"

"Yes," he retorted, "let's quit."

He stared unseeing at her as she rubbed at the lace of her bodice until her dreary whisper brought him to the present. "See the blood on us," she said; "just like his soul!"

The man laid his arm on the table and sank his face into the crook of the elbow. The girl sprang up and ran to him; with her arm about his neck she drew his head back.

"Now, here, Hammy, you mustn't. You've got to

brace—you've got to go down the street and see all the boys and sort-a laugh! Now, here—here—" and she held him tight, choking a desperate sob in his dry throat—"let's wash the blood off your collar—you've got to face it all—you'll have to face 'em all! Here—" she dipped her handkerchief in a glass and rubbed his collar and the lapel of his coat, while the other woman sat watching them unheeded. When the waiter brought the whisky, the man and girl drank it swiftly, but she continued to clean his coat, and then brushed the hair from his brow, which was covered with tiny iridescences of sweat.

"I'm all right," Arnold said presently. "You must go home, Nel." He turned to Miss Wayne. "We'll take her home, won't we?" And when Nella protested, he kept repeating mechanically, "You must go home—you must go home—I'll get a cab and take you home."

After he had gone out, the girl toyed listlessly with her glass. She seemed unconscious of the other woman's presence for a while, and then turned suddenly to her.

"Help him!" she muttered. "You're a religious woman, ain't you? I've seen you on the avenue. Eddie's gone and we killed him. Jack Arnold got him to the track—and I just laughed!"

"He cared for you?"

The girl rubbed her rouged cheek restlessly. "I wouldn't let him. O, you know so little! You talk so grand, but what good's that? Here's Hammy!" She found a bitter pleading. "You help him or your

damned religion's no good. Nothing's good that doesn't help!"

The preacher of the new thought sat back in silence. The girl listened to Arnold's footsteps coming back; she muttered again: "Who cares? O, God, who cares?"

He looked at her, and mutely helped her with her wraps, and then he said, in a sort of brother's gentleness: "I care, Nel. He loved you, after all, and I pulled him down. And you—you were fine—you kept your word."

She followed, comforted strangely, to get into the cab. Grace Wayne went with them and watched with a sense of failure the man begin once more his soothings. Nella sat as in a dream while he took her hands, saying: "Now, Kid, don't cry—don't you care—I've understood it all, and you've been fine. Now, don't you cry!"

But on these words, as he was helping her from the cab, she did cry, so that Miss Wayne saw him supporting her to the elevator, and heard her sobs and his entreaties.

The woman sat quietly until he returned and got in the vehicle. "I didn't want to say anything," she began; "she'd better be alone and cry it out. She won't kill herself?—it isn't that bad, is it?"

"He was the only decent fellow she ever knew in her life—that's all."

"She cared," retorted the woman, "and you killed him. Where are you going? The girl said you were a friend of the family. You ought to see them—if you can say anything to his mother—anything—"

"Yes." She saw his face as the rays from a corner light fell within the cab; it was breaking with agony. "His mother—and Stella!"

"You must go, and to-night. You can't explain, but you can do something—you can just say—" she broke off despairingly—"well, won't you?"

"I'll go." The young man gave some directions to the driver, and then turned to her: "I'm glad you're along—you're steeling me through. You see when you're once in the net, you're fast, and then you're always netting others."

"Yes—what about the soul of this girl?"

"What have I to do with her soul?"

"There was a man who cared for her, who might have saved her from what she'll come to as sure as the stars, and you and your kind simply snuffed him out. She told me enough to understand—you crushed the last hope she had—and you ask me what *you* have to do with her soul!"

"He wouldn't have married her," muttered the man, "he couldn't!"

"No matter. He was good and he was something to her. And she spent her grief comforting you—trying to help you—who'd killed him."

The young man twisted from his companion on the cushions and looked from the window. "You're getting me in fine shape to see that old mother," he muttered, and then cried, as a suppliant, reaching to take her hand in the dark; "Don't!—I'm done for!"

The cab stopped on a quiet residence street. Arnold burst from it as though escaping torture. He glanced up; a light was in the upper windows of the house.

He looked at his watch. "His mother knows, now—she *knows!*" But he ran to the steps, and again the woman was alone in the cab, this time for half an hour, waiting in silence.

When the young man returned, a neighbor woman was with him; after a moment he came and entered the vehicle. Grace Wayne did not question him, as the cab went down-town, but he seemed to catch her glance of inquiry when they passed into the radiant streets, for he turned to her.

"She kissed me—his mother," he said. "Nel tried to help me—and *she* kissed me! What's the matter with you women?"

"And one way and another, you crush them. I think we'd better go and eat something—you're shaking—do you know that?" She caught his hand and held it. "You're trembling from head to foot." Her pulsing strength seemed to quiet the blood surging through him. "Here, we'll get out. You'd better have something."

He laughed shortly when they were on the pavement before the entrance of a café on Mason Street. "No, I think we'd better go to a quiet place—there's music down there—and there's blood on me."

They were turning back, when Louis Ferreri ran out from a corner cigar stand. He gave a surprised glance at the woman by Arnold's side, then drew him to the curb. She stopped abruptly where she could hear what was said.

"It's awful about Eddie," cried the slot-machine man. "It's awful! Have you seen Stillman, Ham? They're looking for you—ain't you seen *anybody?*"

His voice lowered. "I guess they want you to get a-hold of Weldy and stick by him; yes, sir, stick right by him, until that committee reports in the legislature Friday. There'll be an awful row over this business—it's the twenty-ninth track suicide this year, and Weldy's all in the air."

"Where is he?"

"I dun-no. Home? Cri's sake, Ham, you got-a hold him! If the papers flash this big, it'll make things bad—you got-a get next to Weldy and hold him!"

Arnold felt confusedly of his head. "O, let me be!" he growled, and Louis seized his arm.

"Come on, I'll go out with you—you got-a get him, and stick by him and keep these damn preachers and women from him till that committee meets."

"Now, here, Louis, let go of me! Don't stick anything more on me than I've got now. I'm pulling together a bit." He glanced back at the woman by the curb. She came to the two men and touched Arnold's arm.

"Come," she said calmly, and they went along to one of the many little oyster houses of the street. But Arnold ate nothing; the wine stung his brain to a fever, and he wanted to get again to the street, anywhere, to do anything, so he could evade the silence. Miss Wayne put her hand on his. "Here, you mustn't drink anything more. I understood something of what you were saying about this race-track business. What are you going to do?"

"I don't know—I don't care. I've dragged a friend down and killed him, and that's enough to-night."

"Yes, and you're dragging another down and killing him, aren't you?"

Arnold stared at her across the table. "What are you saying?"

"I've read the papers a little—I've a certain knowledge of *you*. It flashed across me just now what you stand for, what your whole life signifies—a tool—a go-between. And now you're trapping another man to his ruin. And you are!"

The hard-faced young man laughed with mordant humor. "Yes, you see it exactly." He went on with reckless effrontery, defying her with tone and gesture, leaning to her across the table. "Yes—I've bought him. I can swing him, crash him on the rocks, break him any time. I'm glad you understand. You've interested me. I've stopped to listen to your transcendental preachments, your fine moralities, and I've often thought I'd like to throw you face to face with life—the computation on which it's based down here. But you're above it all—you—"

"Be still!" she answered. "I've suffered too!"

He paused an instant. "Yes—a man loved you—and he died." He went on slowly: "I've wondered what sort he was, to send you about the world to save souls—to help men down in the street. And you—you saw something far different—a beautiful, mystical faith of sweetness and light. And it wasn't what he meant. He'd say you failed."

"Hush!" she went on steadily. "You've no right to say this. I've known two men—he, the purest soul that ever man was, and you, the worst. And you—you're strangely like him. I can not grasp it, but it's

so. Beneath it all—" she went on, steadfastly watching him—"your evil, I've seen his face, his ways, his—greatness. It is as though he had come to me again in you."

He sat back, stirred for a moment from his trouble. Then he looked at her in his old ironic doubt. She had been the actress, the dramatic figure of a sort of spiritual adventure, thrilling men with her voice, her lofty face—but the homeless, the fallen, the shamblers—what was her mystic faith to them?

"He told you to go help them," Arnold muttered, "to go tell men of his Christ. But the God he knew was a fighting God down in the London slums; if that man's soul is watching you, it will say you've failed."

A recriminating color touched her face. "It's hard to talk to you. It seems that out of dreams and remembrances, that I'd known you." Then, with a cry, she rose before him: "O, leave it all! This is why it seems I'd been fighting for you—my faith in you!"

He stared at her, heard her voice come low, vibrant with feeling, her womanhood disengaged him from his uncaring world, a tenderness like the after-lure of a splendid light; she had broken the gates of his ruthless life. "There's a way!" she pleaded. "O, a way—and you shall come!"

"The way," he muttered, and felt her hand tighten on his wrist. "No, I'm done for."

"You're just beginning," she answered, and a power beyond him confused his senses with inordinate hope. And in this dream he heard her laugh, a sure, glad triumph above the shuffle of the street, the witless mirth of the money-spenders about them in the café.

She touched his arm again. "Come," she added; "you must see me to the hotel. It's very late."

Still under the spell of her strength he went with her along the streets, and presently he cried: "Ah, well, it's the end. Eddie's dead, and it's the end for me." He turned his worried eyes on her. "I'll go," he muttered. "I want to be alone—the hills." For the stillness of the North, the peace of the high and secret places rose; his memory went back to the years before the city had dishonored him.

"Yes, go," Grace answered. "I want you to. For your redemption—and for my own. I know you—you're proving yourself. I told you nothing of all this you've lived was your real self. I believed in you."

He looked at her steadfast frankness; he had put by for a moment her esoteric aspect; he was silent before the largeness of her will, her unfearing, her human sweetness, wondering if from her faith these came. But his old worries trooped back; brought, it appeared, by voices from the vestibule of the fashionable apartment house. A carriage was turning at the curb, the light flirting on the wheels and harness.

"You can't quite know," he retorted dully.

Miss Wayne turned to watch the people coming from the Albemarle. The men were in top hats and long coats, showing, now and then, a pearly glint of evening attire; the women muffled elegantly, giving forth evanescent suggestions of exquisite gowning.

The party was quite past the doorway when one of the young men turned and then cried loudly. "Why, Jack! Great—" he recovered himself, smiled broadly and put out his hand.

"How are you, Watt?" answered Arnold quietly; "how are you?"

"Jack, haven't seen you for days!" Exuberance and puzzled inquiry were in Watt Chatom's tone. He glanced at his sister, who was with a black-bearded man, evidently embarrassed at Grace Wayne's presence with his friend.

Miss Chatom smiled in some astonishment, nodding to Arnold, and Watt went on: "Why, I'm mighty glad to see you, Jack. Say, we won the Narcissus—a little mare I had named for Edith. She gave me a glove that we tied under the bridle-band, and Mogan rode to a killing finish!"

"Yes?" Arnold's voice had its old friendliness. After her nod and her surprised glance at Grace Wayne, Miss Chatom came no nearer, but at Watt's words she turned with a deprecating laugh, as she bent to enter the carriage. And then, looking at Arnold, her eyes dilated, staring at the blood on him. The horses turned, but the man and the woman at the door still saw Edith Chatom's terrified eyes on them from the carriage gloom.

"Friends?" Miss Wayne queried. "Edith M was the winner, was she?"

"Yes," he retorted, "and Eddie's dead at the morgue. Ah, you can't know what's behind it all. He was my friend—he'd never have gambled in all his life if I hadn't led him on. Always, I've been helping smash some fellow down. Yes, that's it! I'm sick with it."

"You shall go," she answered. "Nothing can matter now—nothing harm you nor lessen you. I believe in you. You are a part of my own soul's good."

He evaded her nervously, unstrung again by his recalling. "I'm drifting fast somewhere—God knows where! I threw up my hands four months ago and let things drift. I think I'll kill myself—it's best."

The light of her eyes was serene. "No, you'll live," she whispered, and she saw the pathos in his clinging to her, recounting his defeats, he who had been the jester an hour ago.

"I suppose you mean to turn on them," he muttered, "to try and free myself—to fight back. But I can't—there are big men around this town who could have me sent to the pen on a dozen counts just by crooking their fingers. They can railroad me and I'd have no show. You can't fight money and pull, even when you're clean-handed, and I—well, God knows, what show would I have in court if it was seen that I was fighting the big men higher up? It's no matter of souls and women—what can *you* know?"

"You shall be free and you shall not fail," she answered, and he went away with the memory of her high, untroubled smile. A block down the street he sat on the curb and rolled a cigarette with nervous fingers.

"What does she mean?" he said. "She believes in me—she cares. She—" he broke off, his hungry eyes staring back at the house lights. "You'd think she loved me to trust that way—trust *me!*" He rose wearily. "Well, I'm done for—but it seems always some woman's trusting."

Grace Wayne sat long by her window, watching the swinging city lights. She had been alone, complete in

her spiritual sufficiency, but here another consciousness, blind with hates and errors, brutal with common wrongs and humors, had broken a way to some inner conviction that startled her. She had moved calmly on her extraordinary pilgrimage, conscious in a histrionic vanity of its quality, preaching her Nirvanic Christ, a cosmic race-lover, impersonal, orientalized—but here was the brawling Street that lied and hungered and would have none of it; here a soul had come, bitter and adrift, to challenge her mystic Jesus. From the common lot, in the faint, cool light of a cathedral retreat she had stood face to face with this mystic teacher; but now a vision came to her, not of a Divinity, but of a Man of Sorrows wandering along dusty roadsides, obscure, reviled in the market places; He sweat in dirty clothing; He suffered blows and cried out; He doubted in His agony—perhaps He sinned, the human, striving always to make clear His divinity—was this the God men wished?

By her window, looking down on the street, the modern mystic saw nothing wrong in her spiritual constructions, or their outward expression. But she had a vision of herself, alone, a splendid figure under the flare of a great light above a sea of faces telling the new message, and in vain. Only, nearer, from the unbelieving faces, one figure stood, a man broken by defeats along the roadside; he called her in his need, and it seemed that through him she might come closer and be understood by his lying and hungered fellows, by the world from which she dwelt apart.

CHAPTER XIV

On her way through the halls of the Albemarle the next morning a card was given Miss Wayne. She went to the reception-room and there met Edith Chatom. The other woman rose with a direct and composed introduction.

"I have seen you before—often," she added. "I know who you are. But last night you were with John Arnold—he was ghastly, spattered with blood. You see he used to be a—an acquaintance; we have never lost our interest in him. What was the matter? Tell me."

"A suicide—his friend."

Miss Wayne's voice was not inviting. The two women faced each other, tall, direct, with potent life, measuring each the other's strength. They had each the clean and leisured culture of the world, yet were sharply differentiated. Edith Chatom felt at once the need of a defense against the other's resolution, her aloof personality, her unfearing.

"The affair was in the morning papers—though not all the truth. The boy shot himself after losing every dollar on the races. I believe he had used some of his employer's money."

"Mr. Arnold was with him?"

"Immediately after. He was responsible in a way—he'd led the man on. You are Miss Chatom? I be-

lieve you owned the horse against which young Ledyard bet, didn't you?"

"My brother did. It's awfully hard, but these things do happen."

"You are largely responsible—you and your sort of people—"

"That is uncalled for." Edith Chatom flushed and checked her retort. "But Mr. Arnold—may I ask of him? What he—how he feels himself involved?"

"I am going to see him. If you are his friend, you might come."

"Thank you. He might understand, perhaps."

The two women went out and over the hill in the sunny morning. There was little speech on the way to the Family Liquor Store. Grace Wayne went up the outside balcony stairs and the other followed, after a glance at the little alley, the decayed board fence, the heavy German with the Bismarckian mustaches, in apron and shirt sleeves, who was sweeping at the side door of his saloon.

No response came to Miss Wayne's knock. They went through the upper hall and to the kitchen.

Miss Granberry was doing her morning dishes. Nella Free, her skirt drawn up to avoid the splashes and the floor, the underskirt standing out in a fluff of iridescent pleats about the chair, sat near. The girl's veil was tied tightly about her brow above her blue eyes, which were cast lighter from the heavy rings below them; her pale cheeks showed freckles; her lips were drawn. She regarded the visitors indifferently, returning her gaze to the child in overalls, which was crawling about the floor. In its clutch was a toy en-

gine, the placating gift which Nella always brought as a pretext for a visit to Miss Granny's.

The little old woman was shrill with astonishment at the presence of the two women in the kitchen door. She wrung her red hands from the suds, wiped them on her apron, scolded the clucking parrot, and came to greet them with a timorous courtesy.

"Yes, yes—" she answered; "but Mr. Hammy isn't here. He's been here so little the past month, only using his rooms once or twice. And now there's trouble, trouble."

"Do you know where he is, Nella?"

The girl started as her name came from Miss Wayne's lips; she moodily shook her head and rubbed her high French heel against a crack of the floor. "I expect he's at Eddie's mother's. The papers wrote some fierce stuff about me and Eddie. They said he loved me and I dragged him down. Hammy's trying to explain."

"Trust Hammy—trust Hammy," murmured the little old woman, rubbing her thin hands. "O, it's bad, but he'll do what he can!"

Miss Chatom looked from her to the girl; then at the parrot in the window, whisking crumbs down on the ragged little hyacinth bulb which struggled through the damp earth in its pot by the window opening on the air shaft; and at the yellow-haired child with its red engine, a spot of color in the mean obscurity.

"How did you sleep, Nella?" asked Grace Wayne. It seemed that she, with the other perfectly gowned woman in the doorway, was held aloof from some tragedy at Granberry's. "*Did* you sleep?"

"Pretty bad." Nella caught the child's hand and dragged it into the hall. "I don't want to talk!" she retorted. "Babe, let's go see Unc' Pop."

The two women watched her defiant flirt through the hall. By the stairs she met the Captain. The old man straightened up, grasping his cane, peering cautiously through the gloom, twisting his stained imperial. When he saw he had encountered a woman he bowed grandly and stepped back for her precedence.

"Good morning, Madam—good morning!" he said, but he waited until she and the child had gone out. The Captain distrusted women, their chatter, their lightness—they couldn't understand; but then one could have for them the manner of the old South.

"Hush," said Miss Granberry, "don't ever let *him* know of things—he's been a soldier, and it's all fine. Mr. Hammy's paid most everything for the Captain since Larry went away."

"Paid?" echoed Miss Chatom—"O, I see—for his lodging."

The old lady screwed her mouth to discretion. "And you should see how grand they salute each other when they meet! It's just a play! But it's wearing on the Captain—he's waited so long for the troops to come back. He pretends to us, he doesn't care!"

"I'll leave this note for Mr. Arnold," said Miss Wayne. "I wish to see him. But we must go." She glanced at Edith Chatom.

The old woman saw them courteously to the door. When they had gone, she flew to Nella, consumed with curiosity about these elegant women. The departing visitors saw the girl, the child, Miss Granberry with

her apron over her head to keep off the sun, and the red engine a patch of color on the balcony against the gray wall of the Family Liquor Store.

"And that's where he's lived!" murmured Miss Chatom. "It's queer."

"I think they all rather depend on him," answered Grace Wayne. "The girl's nothing to him," she added, "but the old woman couldn't keep her house if he didn't lodge here. And the old soldier—well, Mr. Arnold is a strange blunderer, isn't he?"

They looked at each other with more friendliness. Miss Chatom held forth her hand as they parted. "You showed me a curious light on myself—and on him. He was my childhood's friend. Will you let me know how things come out? I shall call on you."

"Perhaps we can do something," said the other.

The day seemed rather empty to Grace Wayne after the return from Granberry's. She had been accustomed to read and walk in the afternoons, but now she thought of this house of hazards, of the Captain bowing with old-fashioned chivalry, the little old woman wringing her hands from the suds to fetch a chair, Nella Free kneeling to clean the mouth of the waif. From the tawdry run of the day's life, lacking hope, uplift, light from a bright and finely ordained world they never knew, they yet found for one another the ineffable human radiation of whatever courage, gaiety or good each had. Spiritual transcendencies might be, but here in the surge of denying and common life the priestess of a mystic modernity wondered at this charity—her hands had been unsoiled with it all; she had been concerned with the infinite that needs no concern.

Arnold came to her apartments late in the day. They were both a trifle self-conscious after the half-illumination of that first contact in the night. But he was dragged and tired after a day with his dead friend's affairs.

"I was at the house," he said. "It was pretty hard to be treated as if I were his best friend, instead of his destroyer. Well, his mother took it that way. He was short in his accounts with his firm, but she'll never know. We covered it—eight hundred dollars. Eddie killed himself over eight hundred dropped to the book-makers!"

"Who replaced it?"

"We did."

"You mean you did."

"Well," he smiled, "I won more than that on the race. And the boys down the line are paying the funeral expenses—it's all we could do. But his sister'll have to go to work now. Eddie was their only guard. Now they're against the game raw—Stella and her little mother." He was still, and then laughed briefly. "My God, you make me smile—you and all these nice, clean, respectable people who never went wrong in all your nice, clean, respectable little lives. You talk of souls! O, how easy it is!"

"Be still," she answered calmly. "You must not give way to this."

But he rose to walk nervously the length of the room, fretting against the bond she wove about him. His corroding mood broke forth: "Tell me, O, Priestess!" he mocked. "Give us the perfect way—give us the light down here where it's raw and red."

"You're breaking fast." She, too, rose and came before him, and then cried, with a brilliant eagerness, leaning to him: "Some men can live by half-truths and compromises, but you can't. You've tried and failed—you're not even a capable crook. O, you can't! You're rising through it all!"

Her dominance stilled him. In the doggerel wit of the cafés he could mock and confuse and forget, but in this silent room he had to face clear issues. "Ah, well," he muttered, "you don't know. I've tried to get my father out of San Quentin. I tried all ways, fair and foul—and sometimes I've tried to keep straight. You can't know how everything can be lined up against a man—money, social forces, class hate, the law. When once you're down everything is focused to break you and keep you there. I know I'm a tool, but I paid a price to win—and lost."

"I know," she came to him, her gaze direct and level with his own. "It's well to lose that way.

"'. . . Like the man who hath mightily won
God out of knowledge, peace out of infinite pain,
Light out of darkness and purity out of a stain.'"

"Lanier?" He smiled grimly. "I used to know that. I used to read—I'm not all the rounder."

"In your rooms once I noticed Maeterlinck and Stevenson's Child Verses," she went on. "I wondered what sort of man was beneath it all. John Arnold, it seems that I have waited."

"Waited?" his voice echoed, with some surprise.

"For you," she went on calmly. "I was at your

place this morning. I saw them all there—the old woman, Nella and the child. It seems as if I saw something that I had never dreamed of. Perhaps—" she hesitated. "You're teaching me much—that there's a world's work to do different from a'! I've thought."

"The world's work seems to be done by people with aching heads and sore hearts and bloody hands," he muttered. "Yes, and you're above all that—so far, so high."

And then he left her abruptly, as if sick with some resurgence.

She stood long alone, calm; though out of the serene seas of her life a storm was beating, a confusing complex from her womanhood, from her soul. What blind faith brought this lawless spirit to her own? Was it love linking his unworth with her completeness—love, stained, bloody, common with the world's use, but now crowned above the life of the spirit?

CHAPTER XV

Sammy Jarbo, the laundry wagon poet, had ever been beset by two ambitions embarrassing enough to dwell with on nine dollars a week. One was to write a poem as long as *The Eve of St. Agnes*, and the other was to own a top hat. The hat must be size seven and an eighth, and the poem one that should clear his turgid, subconscious harmonies to acute, visible form of beauty. Always the poet lived alert for his inspiration—some day it must come, fecundating his mind until he was heroic with poignant utterances; it might be while he was on [illegible] wagon, or dining at Sedaini's, or idling with his sweetheart on the beach, or alone in his hall bedroom at Granny's, staring at the scrimply wall-paper over his head—some day the divine afflatus should sweep his soul, the dreamed ecstasy, and after that nothing would matter much, even though he still had but nine dollars a week and could not, therefore, marry Mary Mellody.

In his spare hours the poet would tramp over the hills to the public library in the city hall, where, absorbed in rapid and omnivorous readings, making copious notes, scowling over his pencil chewing, rumpling his red hair—an eruption of sighs and mutterings behind the rampart of huge volumes he got about him—he searched and awaited his divinity.

The public library of Old San Francisco was a cold

place; the reading-room close under the eaves, near the top of high arched windows, through which the sea fogs streamed, was golden with damp, and the trade winds scuffed the cornices. All day, beneath the staring gas, one sat and shivered—it was a moving tale that warmed you there; and yet on the shelves were meat, drink, kind homes and a forgetting, and one could write within of millions on the hungriest day. There, with his collar turned to his freckled ears, the poet gorged

Sammy turned down from the promenade of the city hall one evening at six o'clock and met John Arnold outside the office of registry watching the fleeced air dim the street lamps. Sammy looked at his friend with some hesitation; they had had little to do with each other of late. The fine old days were done; the student nights when they had argued verses with a jug of wine at Sedaini's, or wrangled politics with Fred Weldy, the job printer, over a mug of beer at Unc' Pop's back bar, or loitered in week-long idleness about the town. Arnold had now gone far in the blaze of its life, but Sammy remembered the brotherhood; his friend looked forlorn under the mist-filmed gas lamp, the bleak, twilight gray.

"Hello, Ham," said the poet.

"How are you, Sammy?" answered the other.

Coming nearer, Sammy saw a smile in his friend's eyes, a gentleness he had not seen for months, but which was like him in the old days.

"Where are you going to eat?" continued the poet. "It's a fifteen center with me."

"That's about my limit to-night—come on." The

friends went across Market Street to a low-roofed saloon, where, for ten cents, you got the wieners and rye bread, the frijoles and the beer.

"What's the matter?" queried Jarbo, still in wonder. "You ain't broke, are you, Ham?"

"Not quite. I just wanted to get away with somebody I used to know in the old days when we were all free and could laugh together at anything. I wanted you, Sammy, you damned simple-hearted fool! I've been wandering around to-day in a sort of dream, in and out of all the old places and familiar streets—saying, 'good-by.'"

The other stirred and looked up.

"Good-by? You're going to leave? Where to?"

"I don't know, and it doesn't matter. I'm going to quit the town—that's all."

Sammy marveled at the quietness of the other's mood. He was, indeed, neither loftily fortified with liquor nor merely impersonal with cynic coolness, as he had been at times. This was a new reserve. Sammy studied him for an uncertain period.

"Well, I'm glad," he said, at length. "I don't know why, but I'm glad. Maybe you've come to the end of things. There was Eddie—"

"Yes."

"Is that it?"

"Part of it. And something grips me that I don't understand. Only I'm going."

"Where?"

"I told you I didn't know. I'll store my stuff, or sell it, or give it away—all the things in the rooms at Granny's except my army stuff and some pictures. I

spent the afternoon packing some of them—some of my mother's things."

"Packing?" Sammy leaned to him in surprise. "You ain't going right away?"

"Yes. There's no compromise for me, Sammy. I couldn't live in San Francisco and be straight any more than you could live in hell and be crooked. It's just in us—that's all. I'm going to-morrow."

"To-morrow!"

"Yes. The town would break me if I stayed now—if I quit the game and tried to live differently. I'd be the wounded wolf and the pack would jump me. I'll have to go."

Sammy sat irresolutely back. He never could understand—the rattle-brained fool—never!

"I guess you're right," he muttered doubtfully; "only there's Granny and the Polacchi kids and—"

"We sent them out to Scifoni's—Louis and I. Pietro's going to keep Theresa in school, and Angelo will help in the flowers—it's better for the kids than Chinatown. And Granny—well, I'm going to find a lodger to take my old rooms."

The poet was silent a long time, watching Arnold's dark face, the mobile mouth, with its nervous play of weakness and humor and reserve—the bar-room jester, the wit of the tenderloin, who had never, even there, seemed to fit.

"Leaving San Francisco!" the poet mused. "You? Why, somehow it seems the *soul* of the town's in you. O, San Francisco! All that it could mean!"

"There're great things to do, maybe, but they're not for me. I'm going to the hills. I punched cows up

on the Hyampoom once for fun—now I'll do it for something else. I'm going to fight my way back. Sammy, I'll tell you something I never told a man in all the world—I'm sorry."

"Yes," his friend murmured; "I thought the day would come. And I think that girl started it. You've never been the same, try as you might."

"Maybe." Arnold smiled sadly at him. "I suppose every fellow thinks that women could keep a man to the best in him if they tried—but most of them never tried with me. I was good to laugh with and at when the lights shone bright, but when the dark days came—well, a good many times I thought I loved them, but when the dark days came I saw how it was. Once, long ago, I thought I cared, and I tried to live decently for a woman, and then when the game got me at last I went to her for help—just a cheery word to help a fellow through. It was Christmas, and I traveled five hundred miles to see her and broke the last dollar I had in the world to buy her a single rose. I thought it would mean something, but she took it and held it up against the furs and the amethysts and the pearls that others had given her, and smiled—the same smile I once saw on the face of a Mexican dance-hall girl when they told her that a man she wanted to get rid of had killed himself. Eh, do you understand? Well, I just turned away. For a good many years after that I could afford to laugh at them, and drink with them and forget them. Seems like I'd given much and got back little. Now—something's different. I can't tell you, but there's some big hope ahead—it dazes me to know—to feel—" He stopped, and after his thought,

in a quiet voice, resumed: "Well, how's Sweet Mellody and the old crowd over the hill?"

"Things are pretty quiet. Mary's not well. Ten hours a day at Solinsky's is pretty tough. I've been thinking of what you said, Hammy; sure I have."

"Eh?" said the forgetful one; "what's that?"

"O, nothing much. Only if I ever get *Pizarro's Quest* done and fix up that thing about *Spring in Arcady*, I'd be thinking about it."

"About what?"

"O, sort of getting married. But here's *Pizarro*—"

"*Pizarro* be damned! You get married. What are you earning—fifteen a week?"

"Nine," answered the poet dismally. "And, besides, if I get married, it's all off with the big stuff. I might kick out a love sonnet now and then, but it wouldn't be the big stuff."

"Look here. Mary Mellody loves you, son. Now, if I was straight and a straight girl loved me, I'd back *Pizarro* and *Arcady* off the map."

"You'd be a rum poet," murmured the other, and then he sighed. "Ah, well, I wonder if love is the big stuff?"

"Have you asked her?"

"Not explicitly—you see—"

"Come on; we'll ask her now!"

"Now!" gasped the poet.

"You can be married to-morrow."

"What?"

"Before I leave town. Here, now, don't object! I'm trying to put through a great many things that I've neglected."

And to the Granberry lodgings they went in the dusk, the poet still pop-eyed with dismay. He was weak at the thought; he protested.

"There's a light in Mary's window," retorted Arnold. "You go in. I'll tell Granny of the wedding to-morrow. Now, run along."

"But, Ham—"

"Sammy, must I go and ask the girl for you?" Mr. Arnold was imperturbably businesslike.

"No, I'll do it. Love? Love is the master felicity —when love gets a-hold of you—"

The other man swung him about in the hall, and then went on to Miss Granberry's kitchen. The little old woman was among her pots and kettles by the grimy window, when Arnold whispered to her.

"Yes, a wedding," he repeated.

"Bless us!" gasped Granny.

"For Sweet Mellody," continued the man, "and here and to-morrow."

"O, Mr. Hammy!" she cried. "Is it true—is it really true?"

He backed out of the kitchen, with a warning finger raised to her cackle.

But the little old woman could not work, for her eagerness. It had come, then—the romance which she had always dreamed she should some day shelter, touch and know? The young life, the fragrant breath, the wondrous ways—here in the choke and squalor, in the commonness of the day's work, in the gray and ceaseless path, the delicate flower had bloomed, its perfume filled the air.

The old woman busied herself vainly over her

dishes; she could do nothing for her trembling, her fluttering pulses. Once there had been a young lieutenant of Old New Orleans who had gone off to follow Walker into Nicaragua—but that was long, long ago; and fifty years of the gray wolf town had been leaping at her throat since then.

But now, here, in the dusk, in the silence of the dingy kitchen, forgotten, unrequited, her tears were falling—through the incommunicable pathos of life a love song lingered.

A timid knock came at her door presently, and the lame girl entered. Miss Granberry looked at her, her heart beating, her breath short; she could not dissemble her eagerness. Mary Mellody's face was pale, her eyes shining, her voice came low as the flutter of doves' wings when she tried to speak.

"Never mind—never mind—" faltered the little old woman; "there—"

The girl nodded. Granny suddenly gathered her in her long arms, the rough hands about her; and in the dusk they cried, with only the clucking parrot to break the silence. Then Miss Granberry released the girl with brisk energy. "There, dear, we must tell them all!"

The lame girl could not answer because of her throbbing heart; the triumph that had beset her was dissolving now to a softer happiness, choking her voice, stilling her eagerness. Her fingers crept closer into the old woman's hands; they stopped again in the hall, thrilled by the pressure of each other's arms, by the exquisite sympathy disengaged from one to the other.

So Sammy found them, so with shining eyes they looked on him, laughing in happy foolery; and so they came on John Arnold before the door of his room.

He had been about to enter, but he turned gravely on Mary Mellody's little drama, the climacteric of her years of loneliness, of labor, of hopeless outlook, her lame struggle against the ruthless foot of that society which gibes at the girls of the poor when it can not buy them.

"I'm glad," the young man said. "You children—you'll have to hang together and fight through a tough old game, but you'll have each other, and that is something—maybe the only thing, Mary, worth anything at all."

The lame girl falteringly reached her hand to his.

"I know," she whispered; "but, O, you always make me sorry so—for you!"

"Now, now," the old woman cluttered, for she always held the world back from the wounds of her flock, protecting and dissembling as she did her own. "Now Mr. Sammy can write poetry—now there'll be some great things!"

"Because you love him, don't you, Mary?" said Arnold, and the girl laughed shyly. "Of course he'll do great things when a woman loves him so."

"Love?" murmured the poet. "I wonder if love *is* the big stuff, after all?"

Sweet Mellody laughed again.

To her it was glad days.

CHAPTER XVI

Arnold went back to his rooms and was busied with a confusion of books, papers and clothing about a packing-case in the middle of the floor. He looked over the disarray, working slowly and in some doubt. There had been a strangeness about the day, and now the night and the silence of his rooms oppressed him more curiously. The familiar corner shadows haunted him; the piano, with its oriental brazier, and the months' old rose stems, sere and dried; the white figure of the marble Marquise defined with a patrician elegance in the gloom that the shaded lamp but accentuated; even the faded tinsel god on the far wall seemed to question.

After a while he sat by the littered table and watched the well-known and variant objects; with each, in all the indifferent jumble, was some remembrance. His eyes wandered to the saber and saddle on the wall across from him; he could see the mud dried in the interstices of the buckles—dirt from the campaigns of Mindanao and Luzon, of the free days.

It was the first night of the winter that he had been in his rooms, that he had not idled about town after the races, around the bars and cafés and later the unobtrusive clubs, where he had played stud or faro from midnight until seven in the morning. Clean, well-

dressed, inscrutable, smiling—that was what the town had seen in him. Occasionally gently, wittily drunk, but never unfraternal—a good fellow "down the line."

To-night the old life seemed far, detached, a show of small, bright pictures, dissolving one into another to distant melodies. His impersonality suddenly struck him as odd, here in his rooms, in the dusty light, amid the familiar smell of tobaccos, dried flower leaves, books and leather.

"It was never me," he mused. "She's right—Grace is right."

He lingered on her name, vaguely guessing at the hope it gave him, the remembrance of unspoken promises. And with a sense of guilt he tried to evade his imagining that she loved him—it must be this; it was as if a brilliant star had flashed within his sight, and he faltered, stood back, exalted, but afraid. He put her by to think of Sammy's bride—her pale face recurred in the dusk, and her words:

"O, you always make me sorry so for you!"

That was curious about all the women he had known, laughed with, loved and left. What, beneath the uncaring of his life, had they believed in, idealized, and turned from in sorrow? Well, it was done now. To-night, in the silence and the completeness of the ruin, he waited to be free. "I'll tell them to-morrow and then go," he mused. "There's nothing in all the town to hold me."

About the quaint old sideboard that had been in his father's house and now was the receptacle of all sorts of things, the half-grown dog shook himself and came out at Arnold's voice. The master watched it, and as

always, in welcome to the rooms, it sidled forth and thrust its black nose to his hand.

"I don't know, lad," the man muttered; "you and the Cookhouse Kid. You—I—well, I promised to see you through, didn't I?" The dog from up-in-back brought Arnold's somber mind back to Sylvia and the North, to the summer he had known her, when it had seemed, as it had seemed with Grace Wayne, that all that he knew of worth and goodness was fighting for his soul—and had lost. Well, let that go, too; he could make nothing over from the past.

A sound came to him from the chamber beyond. He listened and went nearer. In the dimness he saw some one rising from the divan; a woman came out where the red and green bands of the Mexican serape about her figure made an astonishing picture in the doorway. She had newly awakened, rubbing her eyes, and the man watched her in surprise.

"Why, Nel, what's the matter?"

She turned her face toward him sleepily.

"I lay down on your bed at six—I wish I hadn't—I feel like the devil now. I'd been drinking pretty hard to-day, Hammy!"

She laughed, pressing a handkerchief to her eyes. He saw her white lips move inaudibly, her swollen face grimace with weariness.

"Look here—" Arnold began, but her little, defying laugh cut him short.

"I've broken away," she added mechanically. "Harry hit me and I quit him. I told him that Eddie Ledyard had cared for me and he laughed; and then I said all you sporting men and politicians were thieves

and liars and murderers. He hit me and I just took my diamonds and left."

"Yes," said the young man quietly.

She laughed again and on his bed tossed a little chamois bag with a flirt that scattered her jewels over the counterpane. They lay here, there, in a dozen spots; two big solitaires, a marquise ring of diamonds and rubies, a diamond cluster set in a barbaric native nugget and half a dozen other trinkets. At her throat, holding his beflowered robe, was the great pearl butterfly that she loved best of all.

"O, well," she murmured, in her old careless humor; "it's all in the day's work. Eddie's dead, and I've quit Harry for good. One man's much like another, and I'll break even with this town some way. I've held back from a good many things, but now—damn you all—you men!"

She paused by the pier glass, her white arms raised to put back the hair from her small neck; the lamp cast an aura upon the rustling silken sleeve, as she moved and talked. "I just drifted all day with Myrtle. Some big mining man loaned us his machine, and we smashed it at the Beach. Then I jumped a car and came down here to buzz you. I want your advice. That mining man wants me to go to Goldfield. He's a friend of Tex McLane and Senator Fairchild. You see, there'd be nothing too big for me to go after up there." She turned, with her warm little laugh. "Hammy, tell me, would I make good?" He did not answer, and she demanded sharply: "Tell me. And here—I want a cigarette!"

Arnold extended his case. The girl sat back in the

great leather chair and her eyes roved about the walls —to the student sketches and studies in fading oils, the photographs of camps and marches, the weapons of savage islanders, Mexican ware, the silver and plate and furniture that had been once in his father's house, the careless disorder of the music and magazines on the piano, the inextricable, close confusion of everything in the two apartments. Nella's face was pretty in the light's softening, in the negligée of the oriental robe; her smart clothes no longer obsessed and obscured her girlishness—and she was but twenty-two.

"Have you been down-town?" she asked. "I wonder if Harry left any word with Fergy for me—or anything," she added vacantly.

"No, and he won't. Nella, he's through with you. I *know!*"

She played with the ivory paper-knife on his table. "Maybe," she put in indifferently. "It's all in the game. I damned him good and hard about Eddie—I damned you, too. I told Harry he had made a thief of you. I don't need any of you. I can get along. I've got my kid sister at Notre Dame to take care of, but *I* can get along!"

He looked at her, her prettiness, her uselessness, her frail drifting through the red sea of life that had crushed thousands wiser, stronger than she. Life had nothing for her; she would be the joke of love as money is of honor. She had done her best with the light given her, though that best be worse than nothing.

"Kid, you'd better not," he muttered.

"What else?" she idly said; "tell me?"

"Nella, you're a fool."

"So are you, aren't you?"

He watched her through the dusk of the quiet room. "Stay here a while. You can help do something."

"Take care of the kids; sweep the halls for the old lady?" Nella raised her arm indolently above her red-brown hair. "It would drive me wild—and, besides, a girl needs so many things. My bills last month were three hundred and forty dollars."

The young man went to sit on the broad arm of her chair; he took the girl's fingers, raising them to watch the glint of the marquise ring, which she had put on—the rimming diamonds and the exquisite rubies. "Yes," he said; "I've nothing to say—we're both hit pretty hard, aren't we?"

Arnold rose and went to the window. "My God, what's life? We brought you here, didn't we—we men? But I'm breaking with it, Nel—I'm shot to pieces—this business of Eddie and—"

"O, well!" she retorted; "we'll plunge on and forget! You've done it before. Hammy, you're the most dangerous man I ever knew because you're good to people and they like you. There was Eddie and here's Fred, and there was that country girl you brought down here and robbed."

He turned swiftly on her, but his voice was gentle. "Now, don't," he muttered. "Nel, I'm leaving it all."

She raised herself higher in his great chair, her eyes widened. For the first time she noticed the packing-case beyond the table and his clothes scattered about the floor.

"Going?" she repeated. "Why, Hammy!"

"Yes, North."

"To stay?"

"Yes. Someway, or other, I'm going to save myself."

She idled with her diamonds, watching their glint. "You've been queer ever since that girl quit you—or you her. Perhaps you cared—" She laughed nervously. "It's different when one cares—and somebody else cares. A woman can keep straight and go on, if somebody cares."

"Yes, Nel, it's a fierce game, isn't it? But somewhere things are getting clearer for me. I'm going North and ride range—and forget."

She watched him placidly for a time, and then a sudden enthusiasm swept her.

"Hammy, you go—it'll be grand! You'll straighten things, and get brown, and drive those little lines from about your eyes. O, the country—I never thought of it for you!"

"Look here," he answered, after a pause, "what are you going to do?"

She laughed with her trifling good-humor. "O, I'll get on! Things have broken with me, too. I'm going to pay Granny two weeks' rent and just look around. I've got to have money. I've got Jessie to take care of at the convent—but I'm all right. And I'll go in to make good *big*, now. I can go to Europe any day I say the word."

She sat higher to look in the glass, restlessly human, loosening the robe at her throat to see better its flute-like contour. The man saw the lure of the town in the

white hand raised to her turquoise comb; he spoke idly after a time.

"I told Eddie, once, that I'd look after you, Nel. He begged me to help you, when—the day came."

"That's like the boy," she retorted simply; "but I'm all right. And you—" she added shortly— "Hammy, you go make a man of yourself."

"Look here, Nel," the man paused in his pacing of the room and stood before her, "I'm going, and I want you to cut all this. You've broken with Harry and now, I want you—I want you—" he stopped, his voice filled with uncertain trouble—"I want you to cut all this. Nel, I'm sorry for you."

She sat forward with a slow intake of breath, laughed in confusion; and then, beneath her parleying humor, a flash of bitter energy came at some look on his face.

"Sorry? For me! O, my God—you—you sorry for me! Why, I'm better off than you are—I'm *better* than you are!"

She twisted up from the chair and stood before him. "Go on!" she cried. "Don't preach to me! You go quit it all—but don't you try to make *me* different. You men made me!"

She flashed past him in the dusk. Her laugh came to him, hot, reckless, shrill in its taunting. "You made me!" she cried. "O, go leave it all!"

He turned from the table to find her before the long glass, rubbing her hot cheeks with the chamois. The action interpreted itself. She went to the hall door, loosening the flowered robe at her throat. Arnold followed her and barred the way.

"Where are you going?" he demanded, as she turned on him for egress.

"To get my hat and things in that spare room."

"It's late—you've got to stay, Nella. Granny has a place for you to-night."

"No." The girl fought to get past him; he held her against the wall, his forearm across her throat, but she stared at him defiantly. "You can't go," he muttered. "You can't—I won't have you on the street—you shan't!"

"Well—" the girl watched him a moment, then relaxed her tense body and crept from beneath his arm. "Just because you're stronger, eh? What'll I stay here for?"

"You can't go," he repeated gravely; "you can't!"

She watched him a long time, and then her old careless laugh broke out with a puzzled note in its good humor.

"What are you after? Do you want me to love you, too?"

"Nel," he whispered, "be still! Do you want us to drag each other farther down?"

His voice and eyes stilled her playing. They did not belong to the fellow of old, his whimsical gravity and self-sufficient uncaring.

"I told you I was breaking away, Nel," he went on. "There's only one thing more to do. I'm going to San Quentin and tell the old man that I've given up the fight—something keeps saying to me that dad would rather serve his time than have me get him out by the crooked work I've done. And I'm going to ask him—I've a sort of fever to ask him—to have him tell

me to be *square*, so that I could stand clean before his soul! Then I'll go away."

She was silent with surprise; perturbed and marveling at him. She could not understand, and looking steadfastly into her eyes he knew.

"Hammy," she laughed, "you're so funny now!"

The girl slipped back to the chair and sank in it while he sat down by the table across from her. And again, as he stared at her, her careless laugh rang out.

"Give me a match," she said. "O, you fool! There's nothing to care for or about!"

The young man raised himself to watch her long and steadfastly.

"Nel, did a thought of your soul ever come to you?"

She gathered herself closer in the luxurious comfort of the leather chair—a small heap of color in the oriental robe under the lamp glow, looking at him, her blue eyes expectant with wonder.

"My soul?" she repeated, "why, no. I just drift on like a leaf in the storm."

"Yes," he added somberly, bewildered by some vision of himself fighting back from the dark enveloping her, "a leaf in the storm!"

CHAPTER XVII

Arnold was turning about the deck-house of the *Tiburon* as she lurched through the tide-rip, with a wind shrilling over her funnel that beat all the waters from Alcatraz to the Golden Gate to a green-white carpet, when he came on Assemblyman Weldy. The legislator was on the fore-deck, his collar upturned against the cold, watching the sea fog tumble above the cliffs about the harbor and stream shoreward to eat away, bit by bit, the western glimpses of the city. Arnold also had come forward to pace the deck in the fresh weather; for none other, he thought, would brave the exposure, and he wished to be alone. He took off his hat, and allowed the gale to tug at his hair, watching Weldy, meanwhile. When the latter turning, saw him, he shook his brown derby and laughed a greeting.

"Took the round trip for the ride," said Weldy, as their hands met. "I saw it was going to be a squally afternoon, and I sort of wanted something to tumble me about and blow through me. Ain't it cold, Ham—for May?"

"Fine! Look at that old windjammer trying to pick her way past the Heads? Wouldn't it be great to be putting out for Tahiti or the Marquesas or anywhere four thousand miles away!"

"Ten thousand!" retorted Fred. "God, yes; the farther, the better!"

"If I didn't have wife and babies," continued the printer, watching the last glimpse of the illimitable Pacific, for Fort Point filled the gap as the steamer swung nearer the city heights, "I'd cut out—I'd go to Australia or New Zealand. I'd go to work and study the coöperative commonwealth again. I'd throw myself in, and get enthusiastic and do something. Ham, I've made an awful failure, ain't I?"

"Fred, you're only thirty. What business have you talking that way?"

"Well, here's yourself, old man!"

They stared into the darkening west, the green-gray mystery of the sea fogs blotting the world. A single bar of yellow smote up from the buried sunset; the steamer, hastening through the turmoil of wind, was bearing them toward the string of wharf lights astonishingly clear along the city front. The silence became long and eloquent of introspection. Arnold sighed at length, turning his face with the damp hair blowing about his eyes, to his friend. There was a trace of gray about Fred's temples; and Arnold's curls were thinning. Each man's face had set graver the past year—yes, they were growing older, and, watching each other, it seemed the same thought held them.

"We've played it pretty hard," said Weldy. "Ham, the little lines about your eyes tell a good deal."

The other studied him as if he were seeking common ground of understanding; when he spoke, there was an explosive relief in his tone; he turned with direct simplicity on his friend.

"Fred, you'll think I'm crazy when I tell you what I've done."

"Done? Lord, no one could keep track of you!"

"I've been to San Quentin," continued Arnold. "I saw the old man."

Fred turned doubtfully and looked up the wild north shore. Over the waters the lights of the prison town were beginning to ride out in the gusty dusk. "I thought he wouldn't ever let you see him there?"

"I didn't ask him—I just went. I met him in the warden's office. They're pretty easy on him. He just keeps a few records and files, and they treat him all right. But he's looking old and worn, Fred. He'll never be the big plunger again, and he knows it. Dad was quiet and peaceful; yes, it surprised me so—just quiet and peaceful."

"It's pretty tough," murmured Fred; "pretty tough."

"Well, I don't know. Do I look any different now? I feel queer. Fred, I went up there to tell the old man the whole story!"

"The whole story? What's the matter with you?"

"I mean the way I'm mixed in things. I was going to put it all up to dad—all I'd done, all the fool I've made of myself. And then I met him, Fred, and I hadn't a word to say. You see, he received me so differently. He was as peaceful as old Captain Calhoun, waiting up there for Larry. I couldn't understand for a time; and then he said: 'You're being pretty straight, aren't you, son? I want you—you're all I'll have when I get out, and I want you clean, John—I want you *clean!*'"

"Yes," muttered Weldy, "I know."

"Fred, after that—after he talked on, and I saw how he was waiting for me to make good—I wouldn't have

had him pardoned and out of the pen *to-day* for the biggest bank-roll in the town! I thought he'd fight and fret for that pardon, and to get his name clear, and have a dash at things, and the old man never mentioned it—he simply wanted to know if I'd been *square!* You see where it put me, don't you? He just straightened up and put a hand on my shoulder and said: 'I'm an old man now, and things won't matter much. They'll forget me, but you, son—I want you as you were when we used to ride over the hills and through the big camps, and watch the work; a clean, fine, brave little chap, you were!'"

The two men on the ferry deck were still for a while, each with his hat off, blown and buffeted by the wind, as they stood shoulder to shoulder.

"Yes," said Weldy, again, "I understand!"

"Don't talk any more queer work to me," Arnold went on at length. "I'm through. They can break me —but I'm through. I've been fighting for years; but now that I've lost, I'm glad. That's queer, isn't it?"

"Yes—and what are you going to do?"

"I'll quit the town. I'm going to break away and start anew somewhere and have things different when *he* comes out. He'll be old and peaceful, and he'll never quite know, if I go away now and let the town forget me."

The legislator looked moodily off at the city. "God's sake!" he muttered, "I wish I could! You're leaving me in it all!"

The two friends were silent in the tugging breeze.

The boat was sheering off the ferry slips, feeling the ebb-tide for the run in.

"I passed you money, didn't I? I think we were both drunk." Arnold laughed briefly. "I'm pulling out of that, too. Fred, I want it back."

"What do you mean?" retorted Weldy. "You want it *back?* Christ's sake, Ham, will you take it?"

The other man nodded to Weldy's staring eyes. "Ham, I pass it up," muttered his friend. "I've carried the money around all this time—I ain't spent a cent of it. I'm in a tight place, but I ain't *touched* it!"

"Give it to me," said Arnold, and as Fred fumbled under his overcoat, his hand went under it also and their fingers clasped, tightened and held each other's over the bribe money. The steamer was plunging in between the lines of wave-lashed piles; through the doors, from the brilliantly lighted cabin, the passengers were pouring as the moorings were made fast. In an instant the throng was about the two silent men clasping hands, their bodies touching each other, their faces averted.

"Old man—old man—" whispered Fred. "O, you don't know—can't tell! Don't leave town—Christ's sake—help me through it all!"

"We'll fix it somehow—here, now—" They were borne along under the ferry arches by the crowds, stumbling through the rush of life under the staring arcs—newsboys, hotel runners, police, suburban commuters rushing for boats, arriving passengers swarming to the half mile of cable-cars worming into the turn-table. All about were the cries and tumult of the dusky gray city, the swinging glitter of the city; and now, in the shelter of an arch, they turned to each other.

"I got to go home," said Weldy. "I want to see Lillie. I got to go to the capital to-morrow—but I want to go home. I suppose—" he laughed nervously—"you want me to be square, Ham; to make the best fight I can!"

"Square!" whispered his friend; "it's strange! What's on us, Fred? You've got your fight, and I've mine!"

And they laughed in a sort of gladness, as their hands tightened on each other's in the surging crowd; then Fred, his broad figure above the pack, was swept toward the gates of the Oakland ferry.

Arnold walked up Market Street to stop at the Rococo saloon, idling alone and thoughtful, his elbows on the bar, a heel on the foot-rail, heeding nothing of the gabble—the races, the fights, the graft. Amid all this banal smartness of the town's night, the garrulous shift and play and comment overlying the businesses of men, he went now with a satisfied seriousness. Yet he was troubled; he took out the two hundred and fifty dollars which Weldy had returned him, smoothing the crinkly bills. The balance of the five hundred given him to bribe the legislator, he had spent on his own devices. And now he would have to raise the amount somehow, and give it back. He must rid himself of this thing *now*, if it was ever to be done, if he was to meet "the old man" clean-hearted, when San Quentin's gates swung open—if his soul was ever to awaken.

He went to the Washington Street lodgings early that night. The Polacchi children were gone; Sammy and his bride were wedded and in the country for a

week's honeymoon. There was room a-plenty, for Granny's house was running slack these days; in the little kitchen, where the old woman usually sat nodding until ten, there was no light. The place was quite forlorn.

In his own apartments, curled in the big chair by the lamp, Arnold found Nella Free reading listlessly a novelette that had to do with lords and ladies and intrigues —the only sort of story that Nella knew existed. The girl greeted Arnold with drowsy interest, one arm raised lazily to fasten a comb in her tumbled hair.

The past two days had been dull enough; she had not left the lodgings, and had pestered the old woman morning long with idle and commonplace questions.

"I wish that crazy Sammy and the lame girl he married would come back," she said to Arnold. "It's fierce here—I don't know why I've stayed around. I'm just drifting."

The young man sat down, rolling a cigarette in silence.

"Boy," she murmured, "you must be getting poor, to come down from Egyptiennes to brown paper!"

He held up his self-made cigarette. "Nel, there are worse days coming!" His slow smile had the tension of trouble. "I need two hundred and fifty pretty badly to-night."

"Look here. Are you playing the races again so soon—after *that?*"

"No. I took a piece of money last week to put a deal through and I spent it. Now I've got to get it back. Nel, I'm in earnest—I'm squaring up."

She laughed again out of her idle knowledge of the

town's ways; she did not question him as she looked indolently through the golden-linked bag hanging to the chair. "I've forty-five dollars," she said, "if it'll help."

He shook his head: "I need two hundred more to shove that bribe money back to Harry. I'll get it, Nel —I'll rake the town to-night."

"If you're going to break with them, you'd better not. They've got you pretty tight now," she smiled. "You see, I *know!* You'll have to stay away—you'll just have to change everything—everything!"

Arnold's eyes sought hers with their little worry lifted by an eagerness he did not conceal.

"I know. Everything's got to be different! I can't go away with things half done. Kid, I wonder if you know—if you feel—if you felt as I do, what you would do?"

Again her confusing laugh rose.

Drawing a silver case, she took three rings and idly tried them on. Exquisite with pearls, turquoise and diamonds, she held the largest so that it trembled wondrously. Then she tossed it across the room to him.

"Take it anywhere but Levy's," she said carelessly. "He'd know it, for I pawned it there the time that Stanford student passed the bad check at Skelly's, and we girls got the money to keep his family from hearing about it. You'd not want Levy to know, would you?"

The young man took the ring: "You want to call it a loan, Nel—you mean?"

"No—to pull you out square—that's all." She looked at him with nonchalant confusion. "O, we've all been broke, and we'll all be broke again!" She spread her

small hands to watch, admiringly, the remaining jewels. "There'll be diamonds when we're both dead."

He looked from the splendid stone to her, idle, useless, uncaring—cast by the storm an instant into a quiet pool. Indeed, a jeweled bauble was all she had to give.

A step came to the hall, a hand fumbled at the door; and the Captain came. He blinked uncertainly in the light, as Arnold rose and touched his arm. Gravely, in the old wordless play always honored by them, they saluted, each with his finger to his eyebrow.

"I heard your voice, sir?" began the Captain. "It's been days since I saw you, and no one seems to know of this affair—the regiment at Bamboang. A stranger I talked with in the Square had not heard of it."

"Well, it wasn't a big battle. But all the army people know—that's what counts. The honor of the service, Captain."

The veteran nodded sagely. He was more weak and blind, but with Angelo Polacchi to guide him, he could reach Union Square and sit sunning himself, straining his eyes at times up to the bronze Victory triumphant above the city, above the evil roll of life, a symbol of the older republic, of the uncorrupted fathers and the fighting fellows. There were no such men now; they bred a money-race, gabblers and secret-workers; the women squab-fat from gorging on their wealth, the men lean, harsh, their souls eaten hollow from its getting—such had his America become.

Ah, well! Through it all one could patiently wait; it is something to have a son wounded on the firing-line!

The Captain turned to Arnold with the usual question; his eyes, under their bushy brows, blinking at the sparkle of the diamonds on the woman's fingers. "But have you heard, sir? Next month the troop-ship will sail, will it not?"

"Surely. But it's a long ways around the world—" The dissembler suddenly had a curious foreboding of the day the troop-ship *would* arrive with the Third Battalion of the cavalry—what then should he tell the father of this dishonored trooper sleeping in Samar?

But now he hurried on: "Ah, it was great! Larry'll get the honor medal—a hero, Captain!"

The old man drew himself up with dignity—this was cheap talk, this of heroes—it was enough to have served.

Nella's eyes started from their idleness.

"A hero?" she murmured. "Larry—is he handsome?"

The men looked disconcerted; the Captain frowned, his hand going to the livid scar above his eye.

"Why, it isn't much to be a soldier," the girl resumed indifferently. "Those boys only get thirteen dollars a month, don't they?"

"But the honor medal from congress"—the young man shielded the Captain from her with a gesture—"when you save a comrade on the firing-line, Nel, they give you a medal."

"The honor of service," said the old man; "that's what counts."

From the door he saluted gravely.

When they heard the tap-tapping of the cane die away on the upper stair, the girl turned to Arnold: "I

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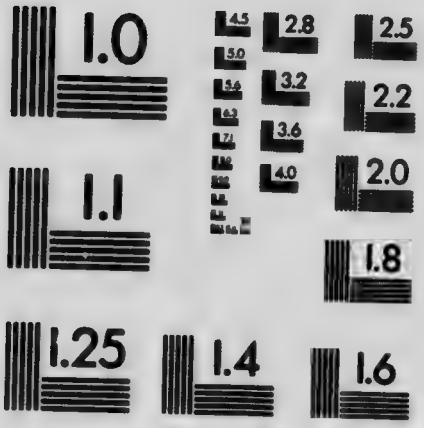

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think he's sort of crazy, don't you? Who's this Larry? Is he good-looking—is he an officer?"

"He was my bunky." Arnold faltered a moment with a smile before her intent, wondering where he should limit the heroic vision he had called up for the father's eyes.

"Is he a lieutenant?"

"Yes—he'll be a lieutenant after this affair at Bamboang. But it may be years before Larry gets home—"

"Then what are you lying for?" she retorted. "That old fellow's waiting for him"—the girl shook the young man's arm and drew him closer to the table, her eyes bright—"and just suppose he does come? A lieutenant with a medal of honor!"

CHAPTER XVIII

On one of those rare San Francisco mornings when the Pacific, ceasing for a space its buffetings, sucks up the odors of the South Seas and pours them on the California coast blending with the clean north to make a perfect day, Arnold came to walk with Grace Wayne to the northern slope of the city sunning itself in this peace. He had asked her this with serious, authoritative directness and she went smilingly. From their feet the blue bay rippled, the sun lighted an opal land beyond, the Marin Ranges of ridge and cañon showing adventurous beauties never seen save as now when the sea curtain lifted.

They walked far in this morning peace, Grace serene with it, and Arnold self-absorbed. From Russian Hill, where they finally sat on the browned grass, they watched the gaudy wedge of an Italian fishing sail beat through the Gate. They had talked familiarly of commonplaces; she had come to feel a pathos in his confidences in little things, when within him he was struggling to find a greater way.

"Well, I've done a deal since I saw you," he broke in, at length. "I went to see my father and it was as you said. I came a way with the idea that nothing was as important as to break with all this"—his hand swept over the stretch of roofs from the hillside. "Yes;" he laughed uncertainly. "I got the bribe money back

from my friend. It was the sign of revolt—and the fight's to come."

"I told you you shall not fear," she answered gravely, "nor live half things nor do half deeds. You can't, and go the higher way."

He watched the town, wondering if from its common life there rose one note to the transcendent heights of her indwelling. "There are many things to consider. There's the old house where I've lived so long—and the Captain—we've carried on a sort of show. I never knew before how things seemed to depend on me."

"The things of your soul's freedom are greater."

"But it's hard," he pleaded, trying to grasp the simplicity of her view in his complexity. "A fellow doesn't know how to turn. I'm lonesome," he laughed; "I've stayed from the old crowd, and I'm lonely already!" He went on slowly: "You see there's no stuff of heroes in me—not even a conscience—none of that kind of thing. I'm just tired, that's all—just like a child gets tired of its play and wants to crawl off and sleep." He raised his head to watch her: "No conscience nor regret—just dumb and sick with it all. I'm not changed nor reformed—just the same fellow."

"I tell you you are making clear the divine thing in you." She leaned to him with a sudden brilliant eagerness: "You're all that I have denied—that I have evaded and hardened myself against, and you—you have broken through. O, you don't know what you can do or be!"

He rose on the dusty trail among the lupines. "I'm just hammering away,"—he smiled—"that's all I know—the big fight and the losing fight."

She wondered at his gentleness, his commonness; she wondered if he knew that to her a light had come; that with him, a fellow of the gross earth, denying grimly and apart, ruthless to her world of the spirit, she found a sweetness of the earth she had passed by. But in the bigness of his doubts and trouble he seemed uncaring.

"You'll go gloriously," she whispered, and surely her eagerness was telling him; "I want you to win—gloriously—and then—"

"Then?"

"Come to me," she answered simply.

His eyes were steadfastly on her face.

"See, here," he began, "I've known you less than two months—I've seen you in all, perhaps ten times. I've defied you. I've sneered at you and turned you away, and you have been neither angered nor afraid, nor have you surrendered. There's something fine about it all—to have you so—and to have you tell me to come back to you."

And again with her old impulse, a directness, half-command, half-caress, she laid her hand on his sleeve: "I mean for you to come," she said simply. "Do we need to speak of it?"

Then he divined clearly, her surrender—the mystery of it stunned him for a moment, her challenge and her daring—the completeness of her standing forth for him. Again he knew a soul had touched his own; out of a world as distant from his as the stars, as little to be hoped for as that their rays should warm him, she had come with her unfearing revelation. She had looked on him—his best and worst—from a sphere un-

thinkable to him; she came to look with honest eyes—she loved him.

Out of the fullness of it all he could not speak. She had said there was no need of speech.

But presently she went on gravely, with her serene resolution. "I can't tell you all you've shown to me—down through the deeps you made me follow you, to listen, to try to understand you and the others. There was something I had not dreamed of—there seemed a splendor in it all—so much of faith and trying—"

"You know now the worst about me," he put in simply. "I've never done a friend, though I killed Eddie. And there isn't a woman walks this town that can say I dragged her down. When I could I tried to help."

"No, not that," she answered; "I could not forgive that!"

"Never that," he went on. "Perhaps it was you somewhere in the dark days that stopped me."

"I told you once," she touched his arm with a new overarching sweetness that stirred him as nothing yet had done, "that I had been with you long ago—that the face of a man who loved me seemed to come again in you—the saintliest man I ever knew. In you, John Arnold, your lawless uncaring soul!"

"You loved him?" he said and stared at her.

"I was touched by it. I was never awakened then; I have gone all my life alone—until now."

His hands went slowly down to tighten over hers; the first act or word that had seemed to answer her. "Ah, God—it's wonderful! I'm going back. If there's anything would bring a man back, it's to know

at last that a woman cares—that above all the wreck and outrage he has made, she's waited and believed in him!

And at his new exultance, his sweeping awakening to this miracle, she became half-frightened, turning breathless from his touch, the passion of his eyes; for she had not known this—she had walked apart from the common lot, its littleness, its sweetness. Now she stood in a fear at her ineptitude and ignorance before the spell she had evoked. This was to be love, then, as the world knows it—love, the common instinct, unheeding and unlovely, that keeps the human scheme running, that breeds, spawn-like, in the sun, and which men and women, concealing the ruthless law that scourges them to it, pathetically glorify in its squalor, which they dissemble as the gift and the end of living. And from her soul she fought to believe more than this, to find a way about the barrier she had built lifelong against the thing. Love had come to her out of the common world and she would glorify it, too, as a symbol of the infinite and eternal.

So to his sudden great hope, the firing of a splendid courage in his eyes, she tried to keep her defense, and then, laughing, in a happiness beyond all she had imagined, she again surrendered: "O, don't ask me! Only go on—always on. You shall—you shall be all I dream and believe for you!"

Her fluttering eagerness, the breaking of her serenity to this shy uncertainty, unknowing how to love, how to stand before him, the confused wonder of his eyes, was odd in her—her proud, tall womanhood unbalanced and finding need of the dainty artifices, the

allurements of the sex, which she had all but put by. So, now it was a common laughing happiness, as of a comradeship discovered, that they went hand in hand down the trail of blue lupines. The light in her eyes was as he had seen but once in women, and that he had crushed, forsaken.

But now he was caught up in a great light, finding a promise of courage and gladness that dazed him, coming after the mordant satire of his yesterday. Yes, now there would be a way, there would be a place for him somehow, sword room to strike back and to achieve. When he went from her at the hotel he was high with this ardor; he ran down the steps and away as if now, on this moment, depended great issues—as if the tide of his youth flowed back, the fervor of years gone drowning mightily the wreckage and disorder of the shores of his failed life.

Grace Wayne passed the afternoon in a reverie. At five a caller was announced. She met a stranger in the parlors, looking at him with impersonal interest. She was accustomed to whimsical interviewers, curbstone theorists drawn by her discourses. Here was a big man, with hard hands and the clean, homely garb of the country—an unwonted figure to her.

"I've heard you preach," he began, his blue eyes fixing her grimly. "You preach of souls some kind of way—and I seen you twice with the blackest cur in this town. I followed you once—you smiled at him. I'm from th' Nowth. My name's Banway."

"Yes?" Miss Wayne spoke slowly, studying his implacable calmness.

"I wonde'd how you'd account fo' it," he went on. "It don't fit with you' preachin'; though I can't make out all you' preachin'."

"Why? Tell me?" she asked eagerly; "I don't understand you."

"Will you come with me?" he retorted, with gathering vehemence. "I want to show you—to tell you. I won't ha'm you—I'm a woodsman from Humboldt; I'll treat you faih, but I want to show you."

The woman looked about the parlors. His voice was rising, he was a striking figure. "Wait—I'll walk with you," she said. "What is it?"

They went out and along the street, the man silent until she questioned him. Then he answered, more calmly:

"You know this Arnold—you saved his life the other night. I was waitin' to kill him. I followed him an' you along a ways, but I didn't get a chance with him alone."

"Tell me," she said calmly. "I don't know in the least what you mean."

"I'm taking you to see a girl he brought down here—robbed of ten thousand dollars, promisin' to marry heh—an' turned heh to the street." He broke out swiftly as she stepped back. "You know what I mean!"

"No," she answered clearly. "That's one thing he couldn't do!"

"That's what he stands fo'—his whole life. It's what the city stands fo', and I wanted to ask you—you preach of souls an' befriend him!"

She shook her strong shoulders, drew in the sun-

filled air, again herself complete. "I don't believe you," she said; "nothing."

He laughed furiously. "Come! Lord God, I don't need to talk!" And then he saw some pitiable fear breaking on her face. She crushed the revolt and turned away. "God's truth!" the big man whispered and hurried after her.

She was dulled by his passion; it convicted her, damned her, and at last she cried, unheeding him: "No—I don't believe!"

"I came from the Nowth to get heh. She was the preacheh's girl. The mate of the *Nelson* told me, fo' she neve' wrote what happened. She came to marry Arnold la t Novembeh—he robbed heh, and she's been in a little Jew shop workin'. I found heh, but she's too crazy sick to tell me all of it now. But I understand! Here's the place."

They were before a house in a block of common residences and petty shops. Under the bay-window was a dreary little garden, a patch of thin grass between walks of rotted brick, with a cluster of calla lilies dirtied by the sweepings from the door, which was under the stairs leading to the first floor.

Through this basement entrance Banway went along the dark hall. They passed a door through which Miss Wayne saw dark-skinned girls bent over a dozen sewing-machines, each operator heaped about with cheap, stiff clothing. On a long table piled with unfinished basted stuffs sat a thin-faced young man, the boss of the finishing shop, where the clothing, cut and measured at a "ten-dollar tailor's" down-town, was put together under contract with the tradesman.

The floor was strewn with clothes and remnants, tailoring apparatus and ironing boards, work-boxes and tag-cards; the air above the snarling machines was thick with lint and dust; the operators, packed side by side, working in the thick light from the single window, were in a blur, and the chemic smell of the cloth stung the nostrils.

The sallow foreman glanced up from his cross-legged posture at the visitors, then went to measuring; the girls at the machines shot furtive looks. Through this apartment went the woodsman to another, windowless, and piled with clothing, bolts of stuff, boxes and tawdry furniture indistinguishable in the gloom, and beyond this was a rear room, with two windows facing a court. This, too, was choked with boxes, furniture, disordered household stuffs. The light from the sunless yard showed a bureau, a bed, mean and thin, girt in with trunks, washstands and rolls of covering; and beyond a narrow cot hidden by the barricade of stuff hedging it about.

The man paused. On the cot, under the tumbled coverlet, indistinct in the light from the yard, was a [illegible] figure. By her head, on a trunk, was a glass covered with a flat-backed hair brush.

"They let heh sleep here," said the woodsman solemnly. "Fou' of the girls sleep here, fo' a dollah a week from each. An' here I found heh—Sylvia, who had all God's out-doo's fo' a home in the country-up-in-back."

The girl stirred and looked up feverishly bright at the woman who bent over her.

"It hurts my eyes—the light," she said vacantly, and brushed the hair from her cheeks.

"I brought a—a—friend, Lal," said Banway awkwardly, "just to see you."

The girl turned listlessly to the window; she began to talk with incoherent swiftness, rambling on until they lost the thread of it, and Banway turned to the woman. "This is heh! Now you believe?"

Miss Wayne held the girl's hand and watched her cheeks' color rise to her wide eyes. "I don't know —I—"

Banway caught a picture from the dresser. "You *don't* know him—who's that? Theh's his name signed —he gave it to heh up in the Nowth fo' he lured heh to the city."

Miss Wayne looked on the face in the photograph. Arnold wore the khaki uniform of the army in island service, carelessly at ease, the silken guidon of the troop in his gauntleted hands, his campaign hat tilted back. The picture had been taken five years ago by a native in Iloilo; a handsome, daredevil license was about the pose, the lithe figure, the thin face—the adventuring soldier of fortune, the debonair call of youth on mysterious quests was there. The very print, exhaling a subtle, oriental odor, like sandalwood, the queer studio mark, had the romantic lure of strange distances, days of danger and nights of mystery. It was evocative of all that one beloved would dream of, treasure, hold in idolatrous fondness—and across it was written: "To my Little Girl in Blue."

Grace Wayne's hands relaxed. The sick girl caught

the picture and held it close to her breast. "It's all right—all right," she murmured. "Boy!"

"He was going to marry you, wasn't he?" said Banway, with abrupt, soft melancholy. "And he brought you to the city."

"I know. He said we'd have a little home somewhere, with roses, and then he got worried."

"And he took your money and kept it—"

"Don't," the girl muttered, plucking restlessly at the coverlets. "It's all right—I know he cared—I *know* he did!"

Miss Wayne rose. "Be still," she said, to the man's intent pursuing; "let her be."

"You believe?"

"Yes. Come; we'll have to get her out of this place. Telephone for a carriage, will you, please?"

The woodsman stared at her uncertainly. The woman went to the front room. "I'll take her to my apartments," she said quietly. "She needs care and friends—I don't suppose she's so very ill."

When Grace Wayne returned from the telephone, Banway was holding Sylvia's hand, watching her with fond intent. The foreman and one of the machine operators looked at them curiously, but when the woman spoke, obeyed with the silence of the underling apt to orders. "Gather her things," said Miss Wayne to the Jewess, and the other went about among the musty furniture and heaps of cloths, assorting the sick girl's belongings.

When the carriage arrived Grace Wayne pointed to the cot. "Carry her out—in those clothes as she lies."

"To your place?" asked Banway. "Will he be there?"

"No."

"He won't see heh?" There was menace in his tone, a challenge to her and her kind.

"Never—at my rooms." Grace Wayne's eyes met his steadily, and he did not doubt.

Banway lifted the girl in the coverlets and went through the dark hall. In the afternoon sunlight of the street she shrank closer to his arms and sobbed. "See here," growled the big man, "you don't care for him—damn him—you don't care, do you?"

But the girl cried. In the carriage he held her as one would a child.

They were driven slowly over the cobbles, and presently the carriage stopped before the Albemarle apartments. With a brief direction to Banway, as he carried the sick girl to the elevator, Miss Wayne paused to pay the driver; when she turned she met Nella Free by the curb, looking at her with suspicion and surprise.

"See here—that's a girl I've seen," said Nella. "Do you know her?"

"I have just discovered her."

Nella watched the man carrying the wrapped form through the door.

"It's a funny thing," she muttered. "I just saw you passing—I couldn't help wondering, I was so startled."

"Nella," retorted Miss Wayne, "do you know about this girl?"

"Not much," Nella's laugh was an easy evasion.

The other woman watched her searchingly—the trim figure in its smooth, light furs, the violets falling with Gipsy-like carelessness from her bodice, the small face piquant, vacantly good-humored.

"Will you come up with us?" Grace asked, after her intent study. "Perhaps you can help."

Nella glanced about. "There are men in this place who know me," she said. "Will you take a chance?"

"Come," answered the other. They overtook Banway and his burden in the hall. The sick girl murmured incoherently as the elevator ascended. At the door a small boy in buttons approached.

"A lady to see you," he told Grace Wayne; "Miss Chatom—she said she'd wait at your rooms."

Miss Wayne looked at Nella a trifle disconcerted; then she opened the door.

Edith Chatom rose in some surprise, her eyes on Banway, who paused with the sick girl in his arms. She turned to Miss Wayne in the rear chamber, her hand on the white counterpane of the bed.

"I wanted to see you further about John Arnold," she had begun. "Watt wants him to go to Tuolumne next month—it would be the thing—"

"Hush," answered Miss Wayne.

The sick girl had turned breathlessly to them, her head on Banway's shoulder. "O, I just couldn't find you, Jack," she said; "at first I thought you'd left me!"

They were so still that the silence was interpretive. Miss Chatom came nearer.

"I've heard—" she whispered. "Has he something to do with this?"

"To this room, please—" Grace Wayne directed

Banway to the bed—"yes, he has had everything to do with it. It's perfectly useless for you to know, but—well, perhaps you can help to straighten things in some fashion."

Edith Chatom nodded. The air was surcharged with the significance of the thing. The rich man's daughter followed the man and woman to the rear apartment. Nella Free stood alone in the front room, listening to the preparations in the chamber. The two women were stilling the girl's delirium, heightened by the stir of her removal; Nella could hear the quiet voices, but she did not move. They took from Sylvia the soiled blanket of the finishing shop, threw it without in the hall, prepared a bath, and finally closed the sliding doors, shutting the man out in the sitting-room. He stood with his hat in his hand, listening to the voices, the sound of running water, the girl's fretful interruptions, looking now and then at Nella by the door. She had not moved.

At length Miss Wayne entered from the other room, searching for some article on the center-table. Banway was facing the window, blowing the dust from the cylinder of a blue revolver, which he now dropped back in his side pocket. The woman came directly to him.

"Here," she said quietly; "I understand!"

"I don't know how town people look at it," he muttered. "Out on the range, or in the big trees, we'd kill him."

"Yes. See here—you cared for the girl?"

The tall man raised his blue eyes, looking steadily into hers. "I loved heh. I neveh told heh. I was

only a woodsman—head falleh at Nine—an' I was rough. I knowed heh befo' heh fatheh died—an' I neveh said nothin'!"

"And you love her now? You don't care for what's happened, do you? You'll love her and take her now when she can go?"

"Would I?" His wondering eyes resented the doubt. "If I could take heh to the country-up-in-back—if she'd stop thinkin' o' him an' this hell-town whe'h he belongs—"

"She will some time."

"First, I'll get *him*—"

"No, that would spoil everything—expose her—ruin her whole life with the people up there—wouldn't it?"

"He can't live—he's too bad to let live. He's all round a crook—I've asked a heap about him."

Nella came before Banway and watched the bitterness of his eyes. He watched her with steadfast contempt, and spoke with crushing deliberation.

"He's you' kind—yes, we see that."

Nella eyed him steadfastly. "I don't believe it." She turned to Grace Wayne: "Do you?"

"There is nothing else to believe."

The woodsman broke in between them. "Look here—you're a religious woman, his friend. I told you I would kill him. But will you promise me, if Sylvia stays here with you, you'll neveh see him?"

"Yes."

"Neveh speak to him?"

"Never fear. He shall not come here. Never!"

Nella stirred from her curious apathy.

"And you—Hammy was sort of depending on you. I can't make it out, but you seem to draw him on. You're a good woman—and he needs you."

"This does not require discussion. No man could have done this and have hope of redemption." She turned away, fighting down a passion that they could not see.

"He's too bad to live," continued Banway, with implacable calmness. "I promised not to kill him, but I don't guess I can let him go."

Nella turned to Grace Wayne's averted face, mutely catching at some faith and strength before undreamed of, struggling back to stand in their eyes and plead.

Then she began, with a strange dignity, a clearness above the uncaring of her life:

"Listen. He's bad—but there's something above it all. He's tried to do some things well. I know, for I've lived the *life*. See here," she turned again to Grace Wayne, "he depended on you, some way. You preach some sort of high religion that no one understands—and this fellow comes from up North, and what does he know? I know the town, and what it does to men, and you don't—either of you. Things are good and simple with you—you in your land of souls, and this man up in his clean north country. It's different here—life smashes men, and drags them down. Banway, a man meets more temptation in one day of the street than he'd meet in a hundred years of your peaceful little life in the country-up-in-back. Any man can pitch hay, or roll logs, or drive cattle—all that's just play. But down here a man's got to fight

everything. That's the way it is in the city! Just do his best—that's all."

They stood quietly before her words. The girl's eyes brightened beneath the isolating rebuke of their silence; she turned and went away, leaving them staring after her.

Banway sat by the window, looking out. Grace Wayne went to the other room to sit with Edith Chatom, one on either side of the bed, listening to the sick girl's delirium. Through the long night she rambled on in endless repetitions of his name and her love for him.

At daylight Miss Chatom went away, relieved by the nurse they had summoned.

"We'll care for her together," she told Miss Wayne. "And he—well, I've wanted to do much for him, but this—this—"

"I know," retorted the other. "I have been brought face to face, at last— There's nothing beyond this for a man's soul to come to! Yes, it's the end!"

CHAPTER XIX

At fifteen minutes to twelve o'clock the first relays of the five hundred clerks, stenographers and employées from the departments of the great railway system were beginning to stream from the Security Building into Market Street for the lunch hour. Joyous young fellows rattled down the stairs, impatient of the crowded elevators, and through this rush of noonday life Arnold made his way to the floor on which were the law offices of Chatom, Bence and Company. He had been at the Maplewood seeking Stillman, then at the latter's club, only to gain word that the police commissioner was at his down-town office. But here a clerk said that Stillman was in Sacramento, and would not be back for forty-eight hours.

Arnold idled in the corridor for a while. Then he went to the main offices of the great law firm. A stenographer said that Barron Chatom was in and not engaged, and the young man was shown at once to the attorney's presence. Chatom greeted him with a certain surprised cordiality; they had not met this winter, by reason of the lawyer's absence in the East, but Chatom's unerring memory prompted at once the reason of the visit. He had long been appraised of some understanding affecting Selden Arnold's pardon—that always, in many channels, the son had been inces-

sant in importunities for the governor to act on the application. Yet now the attorney was not sure how the matter had been left.

The senior member, therefore, sat back in his chair, his index fingers, together, pointing skyward, smiling with the ease of the successful man, out of an assurance of power. He had known Selden Arnold as a man who ruined himself by his inexplicable folly in sticking to the fortunes of a political aspirant whom the railroad found it essential to destroy; he felt vaguely that the son had a like waywardness. As to the pardon, it was hardly possible now; certain "interests" were opposed, and sentiment or old friendships had no place in the matter.

Barron Chatom, the railroad's candidate for the United States senate, the personal figure of a system that dominated the state industrially and politically, and consented to the farming out of the city to the lesser boss and the agents of the boss—Chatom, the man of the "conservative" interests, church-going, of social weight and family connections, member of the leading clubs, professional philanthropist, chief speaker at important civic meetings, merchants' banquets, development schemes, honorary committeeman on all occasions, from welcoming a convention of bishops to entertaining a sybaritic Russian prince, director on the boards of all the corporations that prostituted the city with bribes and placated it with licensed evils—Chatom, representing the dynamics of a cohesive, yet infinitely variant social organization that drew its irresistible power through every level of life, from gutter dance-halls to the United States sen-

ate, now looked complacently, benignly across at the quiet young man by his table.

Cool, wily, astute, indomitable, unscrupulous—he looked none of these; he was merely a middle-aged man, fat, but not obtrusively so, with a kindly lulling friendliness, an apparent broad, altruistic observance of his fellow-men.

Young Arnold was here inevitably to further his father's pardon; he must be soothed, enlightened and sent away to resume his place in the ranks, for Barron Chatom had a great interest in young men; he was a power in raising money for their associations of all sorts, and in addressing them at the colleges; he had a hearty commencement platitude that the future of the nation was with them. Certainly if all the cool-faced young men in America, like this one sitting across from him, ever rejected the teachings and the examples of him and his kind, the foundations of the republic would move, the grip of money, of tradition, of conservatism on the life of the people, even the hold of the fathers and the constitution, would loosen.

Yes, the future was with the young men, society was with the young men, the genius and ideals of the race were with the young men—it was a great thought—he was dwelling on it now, and he would tell the young men of it at the associations and colleges.

Barron Chatom began by a happy inquiry as to what Arnold was doing, adroit and general questions in a reminiscent, genial glow; then he asked—for it was nearing lunch time—directly after his father in San Quentin. "I suppose, John, that's why you're here. I understand that the application for the par-

don—about which, unfortunately, nothing could be done last year—has a lot of new signers, and you will send it to the governor?"

The great attorney smiled in anticipatory conciliation; a young man would like this frank directness, even though he got nothing from it.

But John Arnold, the son of his old friend, smiled back with serene abstraction on this point. "No," he answered, "I've given the pardon up. It'll be only two years and a little more, and we can wait. I saw father the other day, and he's all right. No, I won't bother you any more about the pardon." Barron Chatom knit his brows in some perplexity as Arnold went on: "No, I came up here to see Stillman—they said he might be in his office. He isn't, but you'll do." He looked the railroad attorney over with quiet sureness. "Here," he added, and on the table laid five hundred dollars in new bills.

Barron Chatom looked calmly at the money.

"Yes? Do you wish to leave it here for Mr. Stillman?"

"I do. It's the money he gave me to bribe Weldy to vote against the race-track investigation—"

Chatom whirled back from the paper as if it reeked death. His brow darkened as he glanced at the outer office, which seemed deserted.

"Bribe?" he whispered. "What are you talking about?"

"I'm through."

"What? Why did you bring this to *me?*"

"That's all right—it's yours. You and Stillman are protecting the game, aren't you? You're going to the

senate, aren't you? The race-track and the railroad are both behind you in the legislature."

Chatom gazed at him; then, with a trot of trepidation to the door, he closed it and stood wiping his brow, again looking back at Arnold.

"John, are you insane?" he said. "Take that stuff away! I don't know anything about—I've nothing to do with it!"

"I know. Stillman's the man who does the dirty work. You just suggest the framing up—in the back offices and committee-rooms, and all that. It's all right. I'm giving the money back to you. I've thrown off on Harry—that's all. Just tell him that I'm not responsible any more for Weldy and what *he* does."

"John!" The great man was shaken, after all. No one else could have come so close on him as Seld Arnold's son. The younger man was moving to the door.

"Good-by. I'm not going to squeal, Mr. Chatom. I don't know anything or anybody of all I've seen and done. I'm not responsible for the town—or you or society. I'll have enough to make myself straight now. I don't amount to a damn—I'm only a fellow away down at the bottom, that the money you represent has smashed. You've smashed a million all over the country. But I'm not kicking. I'm just crawling out—that's all!"

The candidate for the United States senate came nearer, wiping his brow; he was calmer now. "Take that away!" he muttered, pointing at the money.

Arnold shook his head. "No—I've quit—it's the last stuff I handle."

The attorney lifted a copy of the constitution of the United States, which happened to be on the desk, opened it and softly placed it face down upon the bribe money. He put one hand on the back of the chair and sighed. A semblance of his benign smile hovered on his lips, a[illegible]then he sighed again, and came nearer to rest a hand on the other's shoulder.

"My boy," said he, "there are some things that seem ordered by a different law than that which moves most affairs of men. Life is still a grinding together of elemental forces only half-harnessed, and not directed at all, and in the crash a lot of damage is done to lesser bodies. The greater ones are not subject to the laws that smash your schemes—and mine, perhaps," he smiled. "The world doesn't wait on our moralities and philosophies, does it? Neither have the men who do things."

"I don't know—I know one thing first to do, and that's to fight myself free. I'll have to do that before I can help anything else."

"John," said the other, curiously intent, "what's got into you?"

"Nothing. Only I'm going away, and I wanted to fix things back where they used to be, much as I can. But that isn't much." He laughed briefly.

The maker of governors and legislators looked at him. He was really a man of thought underneath the sufficient wisdom of his hour and place. "You would like to make things over," he smiled; "so would I. It's a bad scheme, John. I don't often talk as I am now to you. I'll admit we're all ignorant tinkers at

the thing. My God, where did we come from? Where are we going? Why are we here?"

Arnold held up a finger in the doorway.

"I don't know. But I know I can do differently. If every man did differently—well, it seems all the hard things would be simple."

Barron Chatom grasped his hand at the door. The older man's smile was coming back; it had now a touch of philosophic sadness that made him solemn. "Nothing is more sure!" he murmured, his hand tightening over the other's, "nothing!"

Arnold went out in the noon sunshine of Market Street and walked far, studying the last look on Chatom's face; he became aware that he was pitying the man, and this presentment slowly seemed to encompass the street, the glow and hurry of life, the tumult and the din; familiar corners were unreal, as of another city; some thought not clear to him effaced him from the people, so that he seemed watching all serenely, dispassionately, but removed.

He started into a familiar saloon, and then hesitated on the step.

"The break's come," he mused. "Now for it—I've quit." His eyes wandered to the corners of the town; dear and familiar at the last it seemed. The Street had been his play-place, his battle-ground. In seven years he had seen no man's home; here had been his crucible. It appeared that he saw himself now, not the noted figure of the underworld, but as he had been, only a pitiable bit down under the inordinate crushing of the social structure, nameless, nothing. He turned from his haunts of the night and went on

presently, climbing the hills along the bay. At times he was filled with fears and then prophetic strength came to him. He found the dog at his heels in the summer sere grass; in office buildings and on curb it had, as always, waited for him.

He picked it up in his aimless striding. "Old pup, we ought to be glad, hadn't we? But if we only had some one to laugh with—some cheery, decent people to see. Lad, we'd make good, wouldn't we, if we could get back and forget?"

And then, stopping with the dog under his arm, looking down from Russian Hill at the immensity of the waterways hemming the city, he felt a desperate loneliness—nowhere, in all its life, was there place for him, no man's hand to which he could turn—none. But his doubts fell before strange hopes; he laughed. "O, you fool! Why, there's Edith—I can face her now. And Grace—she's waiting—" He stopped in wonder that he had seemed, filled with his own littlenesses, to forget. "There's Grace—she cares. Good God, that woman loves me! Man, what have you been at all your life to leave them out, these good women?"

Yes, the wonder of it—that, after all, he had escaped. He, with his blindness and his blunders, his seared heart and mordant soul—somehow, he had escaped the law that must hold to punish, to measure evil with evil. Yes, he had been able to step aside and let the hurricane blow by, and before him a fair land lay. He had beheld it through a woman's love for him—her guidance, her faith, her power. "The wonder of it," he muttered; "a woman loving you—a decent woman loving *you!* Old lad, think of that!"

And it seemed, as it had been in his brief moments with Sylvia, that all that was high and brave was fighting for him; that the hill on which he stood above the town that had defeated and dishonored him was a symbol of his real self arisen and unfearing. For the second time he stood above the wolfish city, a victor and at peace. He looked down through the dusk to the great bay, the islands peaked in clear pools among the rippled spaces, the mountains to the north—he who had walked unseeing saw with a strange self-pathos this loveliness. And presently he came down the slopes, overriding all doubts, in a brimming expectation, and went through the twilight to Grace's rooms at the hotel. He visualized how she would look, listen, smile as he eagerly told her what he had done—that indeed he had cut himself off from the life he had lived. When she opened the door, this happiness was upon him, an illimitable new thought; and then she stood, a white apron over her gown, before him. She nodded in silence and stepped out in the hall, closing the door. But before it shut Arnold saw beyond a bearded man busy at a physician's case on the table, and by a bedside Edith Chatom. He smiled buoyantly at Edith. Now, whatever came, he could be her friend, as she had generously wished, and as he had stubbornly denied—that, too, would be different.

And then Edith saw him; she looked steadily, pitilessly at him, with a disdain impossible to misinterpret. From that stare she turned her back on him. Miss Wayne closed the door, leaving him gazing blankly at the panels.

"Well?" she queried, and the tone slew the bigness

of his mission, the great accounting he was about to give her. "No, you can't come."

"Come? In there? But I only wanted to tell you—"

"You shall tell me nothing. You can't come here any more. I can't see you." The coolness of her voice broke to little inarticulations as she watched the light die in his eyes. "Do not ask—you should know!"

"Know? What?"

"That girl—Sylvia. I couldn't think that of you! It's true?"

"Sylvia? Yes, it's true, but I—see here—can't I see you, tell you—"

"No. Never—nowhere." She fought down the storm lashing her, as he did not offer to resist the matter, to rescue her last faith in him. "Never," she retorted steadily, now in command; "I shall not see you."

She closed the door, leaving his eyes haunted as they had been the night he dragged Eddie Ledyard to the cushions of the gold room. He went down and to the street, so confused that his steps unconsciously led him over the hill and up the stairs to his lodgings, where he mechanically lighted the gas and then went out to sit on the balcony rail, debating and construing and defending, gathering his forces after this defeat. Yes, the fool—he had believed himself above the law of recompense; that he could escape the measure of his evil from requiting fate—the lone wolf betraying the pack could slip back through the hunters' line. He had been fool enough to believe—but for the second time he had lost. The clean world had rejected him;

he, with his crippled will for good, his dead soul, was face to face with the reckoning.

From where he sat he saw the lamps down the street through Chinatown and across Kearny, where the cars and people made a blur of motion. There was his life, his place—the gods knew better than he. And, after all, what of his battle? It, too, was a sort of mimicking, a grotesque endeavor to realize some mummery of priests and fakirs for which he cared nothing. He needed no interpreter of mysteries, nor a God.

He had come back to his own now; within the grimy kitchen down the hall he saw Miss Granberry bustling about at the cooking, her gray hair under a soiled cap, the Captain neatly brushed, the Loyal Legion button in his lapel, rehearsing his heroic story to Nella idling by. She indolently held up a white finger to look at the wondrous light of her diamonds.

The man on the balcony turned from them; he saw again the down-town lamps. The night pulse of the city quickened, its laughter, its resurgent lure, maddening him now, demanding oblivion. Yes, this was his place, it had him—he was the perjurer, the briber, the underling of cunning contrivances, the fetcher for his mistress, the City; for her he had sold his youth, humbled his manhood to her bonds. They had been as rose petals—now they were steel.

He rose, struggling to end his troubled debates. "Well, it's done now. Sylvia—I couldn't undo that—I didn't love her—I *can't.* And Grace—I thought she'd help. Well, I had my chances—but they're done, too." He paused, coming slowly back to his resolves, fighting for them with a somber sense of losing, his

strength spent, his weapons broken. "But I can go, now," he whispered, and picked the dog up from the damp of the boards with his old trick of talking to it. "We can make a way yet—by God—alone! We don't need them, old man—none of them, good or bad. We're young—we're free—we can go alone."

He paused, hardening himself to it, the retreat from the battle line. And then he saw again the glow of the kitchen, the old woman at her cooking, the fatherless child, the Captain nodding over his splendid vision, the girl's fairness over her oriental robe—a little outpost cut off in the wilderness of the city, comrades gathered by a fire from the hostile dark, the encircling drift of the storm.

CHAPTER XX

Miss Granberry's rent day fell on the fifteenth of the month.

In the meantime several things had happened. The first was that Weldy, of the city delegation in the legislature and on the special committee to investigate the bribery charges, had voted with the "farmer members" and against his political backers. Therefore, events occurred which one on the inside might have seen curiously correlated.

One of these sequent happenings was a padlock on the door of Unc' Pop's grocery and bar on Washington Street. The old man had been called "on the carpet" before the police commission, his license being due for renewal, and an assiduously formal inquiry made into the character of his "side door" patronage. The amazed uncle of Legislator Weldy protested and explained, but he might well have saved his breath before the high-minded commissioners, for his license was peremptorily revoked. He was at once ruined, for the bar privileges denied him, the wholesale grocers to whom he was indebted at once attached his other business.

The closing of Unc' Pop's establishment hurt Miss Granberry's lodging-house. Its patronage had been dwindling for months, new and modern houses farther down the hill getting the transients; and the old room-

ers cleared out one by one, after the padlocked door of the Family Liquor Store deepened the forlorn aspect of the corner.

But between Granny and Arnold the rent was paid. The latter had not yet forsaken the ancient gable over the hill. A dozen things had hindered, turn and hasten as he might. He had a grave kindness for the little old woman these last days, though he had told her nothing of his resolve. Neither had he told Nella Free, it appeared, though she watched the slow downfall of the house in a careless, good-humored quarreling with Miss Granberry; and a furtive bewilderment at Arnold's preoccupation. She said nothing of her hour at Grace Wayne's rooms.

Arnold had been summoned to a back room conference at the Maplewood saloon, the day after Assemblyman Weldy voted against the race-track interests, and had come away with a smile. He sauntered back that morning, and sat on the balcony railing above Happy Alley in the sun. Here he met Nella, a towel about her head, her freckles showing plainly in this fresh light, cleaning his hair brushes, while Miss Granberry was making the beds.

"I've had a session," mused Arnold, "Stillman and I. I laid it out to him, and he blamed the fiasco at Sacramento on me. He urged and pleaded and damned and bluffed—he said he'd send me to San Quentin for the limit for perjury."

"He wouldn't dare!" muttered Nella, tapping the military brushes on the wood.

"You never can tell—bigger men than I have been railroaded to the pen, and they didn't get a chance to

talk so that it would hurt. You see, I couldn't prove anything with the city hall against me, and if they swung me before one of the push judges, I'd go up, of course. But Harry got pretty reasonable. I told him I'd quit—that was all. I wasn't going to open a fight—I'd just quit the graft—that was all."

"You must," murmured the girl; "you got to. You go on—it'll be just grand."

The young man watched her in silence, her face pale, not pretty in the morning light, her mechanical laughing, her idle ways. He had always indifferently evaded the direct fact of her life; she had been simply one woman of the sort among whom his years had slipped away; he had liked her for her common humor, her lack of complexity and pretense; she had drifted lightly, and troubled no one with accountings. But now she seemed a different being; a sentient human with a problem to be worked out, though how he did not know, and she would never care.

"When you go, I suppose the old lady will close this house," continued Nella. "The Japs are taking this block fast, and the big Chinese company has been trying to buy the corner for years. Now it'll go."

"I don't know why any of you should leave," murmured Arnold. "Things will run on some way."

"Yes," she laughed, "they always do!"

He thought her look on him had a strange intent beyond her careless humor. The day had oppressed him; it had not been easy to face the new ways. He had stayed from the down-town; last night he had wandered on the North hills until midnight, thinking on the new turn to his resolves; finding no solace, and

lonesome as he climbed the stair to the lodgings which had sheltered him so long.

He had no money; he had lost his "pick-up" at Sacramento—the six-dollar-a-day income from the state treasury was cut off the moment he broke with Commissioner Stillman and the track lobby. Within a week this fellow to whom money had been a matter of no concern, now thought the lack of money the most troublous thing in the world. He helped pay Granny's rent and then had nothing. The querulous old woman knew little of his entanglements about the town, nor his new resolves that had begun so fair and come to nothing; she saw in him only what she had always seen: the whimsical jester, gravely kind, lawless and master of his self. It was not for her, this hate and hubbub out of which he had come for years to her lodgings; it was enough that she could smooth his pillows, and let the sunshine flood through the windows of his rooms of absent mornings. But she cried when, with an air of careless munificence, he paid the overdue rent for her dwindling lodging business.

"Never mind, Granny," he assured her, "one way and another I owe more than this to you. Seven years I've been here, isn't it? How many nights have you helped me to these rooms—drunk—how many times been patient with the wild crews I used to gather here? And the Captain—it's as if we'd been on the firing-line together."

But in her cap and black silk, kneeling at Trinity Church next Sunday Miss Granberry prayed—as for seven years she had done—for his unregenerate soul.

But as the weeks passed, John Arnold's soul, what-

ever its hauntings, gave no sign. He had no friends save the street politicians, the petty hangers-on of the city's life, and these he evaded. He saw Louis Ferreri once and the parting left the slot-machine man as bewildered as it did the others whom, with a sort of insolence, he put aside. And through the days the great loneliness grew on him—the lone wolf cut off in the open that could turn neither back nor onward.

At times he caught Nella staring at him, it seemed with a secret fear and knowledge, but he invited no confidences. He looked back on Grace Wayne, the days of his strength with her, with an inner grim satire at the grotesque suggestion of himself, the repentant. And the renegade was more lonely; he was glad when Sammy Jarbo and his bride returned from the honeymoon which had been unexpectedly prolonged at a country ranch near Monterey.

They had the tang of the country on them, the brown, dusty sweetness of the California oak-hidden roadsides winding through cañons to the sea. Granny's hall was blocked with suit-cases, parcels and wilted wild flowers that morning, and in it all Sammy and Mary relating the great story. The shop-girl was fired with color from the month by the sea and under the stillness of the pines; she laughed out of pure happiness at all their friendlinesses; she had haphazard gifts for each; a fern on a bit of moldy wood for Granny, a string of cones for the Cookhouse waif, and eyes shining for Arnold when he took her hands. Her love-weeks had been perfect. She was no piteous drift now of the department stores, the victim of the age's gross commerce, but a woman achieving destiny, triumphing

and completing, proving the puzzle of why she was to live.

Amid this clutter of arriving the poet took Arnold aside. He drew from his pockets scraps of bills, dog-eared margins, disemboweled envelopes.

"Nixy on the epics for me," he began; "Listen to this, Ham. I was sitting on the beach holding Mary's hand and all of a sudden the whole business hit me this way:

"'Never a bird's song, Sweetheart,
In the gladsome summer morn—
Never a dainty blossom
Whose breath on the breeze is borne;
Never a flower at morning
Rustling with Heaven's dew,
Never a thing of beauty,
But, Sweetheart, I think of you.'

"Ham," continued the poet profoundly, "I got it out of my system at last, and it's the real goods."

"Sammy," said his friend, "that's putting them right over the plate!"

Granberry tumultuously seized the author's hand and swung him about. "Lovely!—just like real poetry!"

"Like real poetry?" quavered the poet injuredly. "Thunder, of course it's real poetry—did you think it was a laundry advertisement?"

And that reminded him—he had stopped at his employer's office on the way home and they gave him a big surprise. He was promoted. He was to take

charge of the Oakland branch of the concern—superintend the drivers, and have twenty-five dollars a week! "Wouldn't that freeze you?" said the poet, "*me!*"

"It's fine," answered Arnold, "only—well, you'll live in Oakland, won't you?"

"Yes. I'll rent a cottage—a whole yard for Mary."

This was much for the rattle-brained poet. Who would ever have predicted it? But Arnold was rather quiet. He had depended on Sammy. They had been great, good friends in days before friendships and the simpleness of things had been blotted by the town. Now he was groping about for a friend's hand, and Sammy would not be near. But he smiled.

"All right, little man. It's simply great! Only I hate to have you leave just now."

Granberry's had thus a new sensation, but the old woman wondered who would take the small rooms the two had had. When Sammy and his bride departed, it seemed a little less sunshiny to the dwellers on the hill.

The usual crowd no longer dined at Sedaini's. Ferreri did not come, nor the silent piano player; and with the poet and his wife gone, the dreary little restaurant was blank enough. Bernice Murasky came once and took Nella Free to the Italian's. The Jewess gave a new impression of restlessness, but not of her former sullen disparagement of her surroundings. She looked the other girl over critically, noting with direct eyes the little things that marked the change of which she knew in Nella's circumstances—her dressing, her sub-

dued if careless tone. "Where's your rings—that big solitaire?" she asked suddenly.

"O, I don't wear them much now," evaded Nella. "What's the use? I just hang around the old woman's every day."

"I should think you'd go crazy after all *you've* had! I went to see *Du Barry* last night—Louis took me."

"Ain't you working?"

"Not steady. I'm going to study type-writing—Louis's going to get me a job with the slot-machine house."

Bernice's voice had the greedy little lift of triumph with which women erase the kindliness from one another's hearts. Nella stirred—"I ain't seen you much lately."

"No, I've been pretty busy—having a good time." She lifted her shoulders with a laugh. "I should think you'd go just crazy since you quit Harry. You don't eat at any of the swell places any more, do you? Louis and me was at Marchand's last night."

The other girl was silently breaking Sedaini's sour bread to bits on the flimsy cloth.

"This place is getting fierce," continued Miss Murasky. "Come down-town Thursday and we'll all eat at Green's—you and me and Louis."

"I can't."

"Can't?"

"O, I'm just sticking around," she laughed, "for a while."

"Kid, you're getting little lines around your eyes. What's Ham doing? Is he making any money? The

.. at Jack Morgan's said he was down and out—he'd have to quit town after all this political talk about the races and all. Say, Kid, your neck's kind-a thin. Ain't you well?"

"O, pretty good!"

"*You* been washing dishes? Look at that little blister!"

"I burned it with a curling iron. Say, you seem to be getting wise—is the Spreckels Building still on Market Street?"

Miss Murasky sat back idling with a sunburst at her throat at which Nella's eyes had been for five minutes—as Miss Murasky intended they should. She minced over the dinner, criticizing each course, displaying wisdom of menus and methods; finally getting her curiosity back to the other girl's diamonds. "Gee, why don't you wear 'em? You'll only be young once, Kid; then the town'll throw you hard."

"I know—only I'm kind of tired of them." Nella rose. "Let's get out—I don't want this coffee."

Miss Murasky paid the bill. The pock-faced proprietor smirked and bowed at the door. "My las' wee-ek," said he. "I clos-a da Saturday." Sedaini's face was sad. "No beeziness—no one com-a da hill now. Ol' days done—all Japs com-a ove' da hill!"

"It'll be a lonesome corner," said Miss Murasky, when they were outside. "I should think you *would* go crazy with that old woman and the kid. Say, did you see this sunburst? It cost four hundred dollars."

"Sure," retorted Nella, on the steps, but she did not look back, and the other girl departed with a sense of the incompleteness of victory. Nella went to the lodg-

ings. At the table in the hall she found Arnold and the Captain, the old man bent over a ragged newspaper map of the Philippines on which, following innumerable pin pricks that marked a gallant campaign, his uncertain eyes were fixed.

"It was here," he muttered, "they crossed the river, and then it must have been a good thirty miles to Bamboang and the transport would be slow, would it not, sir?"

"Yes," answered the younger man, "and the roads —well, it was desperately slow among the rice paddies, the fellows tired and feverish—"

The Captain had a finger on a ruddy spot. "Here the reserves were held, I think—and there the skirmish line was thrown forward. It must have been damned rough, sir, on those hills in the night!"

The girl watched them, the Captain with his shaggy white head, the young man grave and dark. "And along the road before they came to the church, was a fence of bamboos. It was a devil of a thing to take in the night, sir, when the charge came!"

Arnold looked wonderingly at the old man folding his map. The Captain had brooded long, evolving a fine theory of Bamboang; he had talked it to the lodgers, to the hangers-on at Unc' Pop's, to the policeman down the block and to wondering strangers in the Square; it was thus and so, with military terms and great manœuvers—in the darkening portals of his mind the brave, red picture hung.

The veteran put away his worn map. He could see little, but he divined a woman's presence. With a bow

he moved off, feeling for the staircase, and as Arnold went to help him, turned with his grave salute.

"The honor of the service, sir."

"The honor of the service, Captain."

"Tell me," muttered Nella, when the old man had gone, "will that Larry get a medal—and when's he coming home?"

"Next month, maybe—I don't know." Arnold evaded her uncertainly.

"He'll be a great man, won't he?" the girl said. "How in the world can we put him up in this hole? But you won't be here, will you?"

"Will you?"

The girl laughed. "O, I don't know. I don't know what I'll do! This is a queer house. I'd like to see that fellow, though—that Larry who saved his friend."

"Look here, Nel, don't bother about Larry."

"Why, he must be grand. Ham, why do you stick about the town? Why don't you get away and do something like that? My God, if I was a *man!*"

He did not answer, and she wondered, idly after a time, if she had hurt him; he had been grave enough of late—she wondered if his thoughts ever went back to Sylvia Spring, if he knew any part of the sorry ending of his evil—and if, to her, he would ever tell of it.

Through the window they watched the moonlight on the bay beyond the city. In the silence the Captain's voice came down the stairs, telling a hero's story to the dark. The Captain had a grand phrase of life, it seemed to the younger man—it rose above the slang and gabble.

A steamer's wake lay through the shining water all palpitant as a bird's flight, and with his eyes on this Arnold's mind went back to the old days—the mist on the rice fields, the jungle plazas, the smoke above the nipa huts, the brown-throated soldiers with the dark-skinned island girls along the moonlit shores. It had been youth's care-free adventure, hot, blue seas, treacherous cities, palm lands; and he, a lover of the wide world, her days of danger and her magic nights, was now hemmed in, broken, held here by a shrill-voiced old woman, a blind man, a restless girl and an abandoned child—here, amid the kitchen smells and the bed-making, the clutter and the gossip.

Well, he would get away—he was finding himself—thank God, he was young yet, even if the triumph of youth was done. He would go away; there was nothing to hold him—nothing!

In the silence, Nella heard him stir and turn to her.

"I wonder," he said, "if curious little cobwebs get into your brain, too?"

"I know—I just go wild with nervousness sometimes!"

But he knew that she did not understand—and never would.

"Where's your lady friend?" Nella queried after a while, as he did not continue, "the religious woman—she's not been around of late, has she?"

"No. She turned me away, Nel." He sat closer to her and went abruptly on as if the need of telling was great to him. "She heard that old story about me, somehow—about the girl, you know. I was depending on her, and she broke with me over that. Everybody

believes it, Nel. Even Granny—I can see it sticking in her old eyes—thinks I robbed that girl and sent her home. Well, you know what every one said of it."

Nella said nothing. She had never heard before this tumult in his voice—the swift rise of feeling. It was nothing like Hammy Arnold of the town, but perhaps the dark was shielding him.

"Well, I can't blame them," he went on. "There's been nothing about me but what looks crooked. But, Nel, I didn't—that country girl went back to the North from me as good as your little sister is at Notre Dame." The stillness troubled him. "I didn't harm her," he went on. "Nel?"

"What?" she muttered.

"Do *you* believe it?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"Because you told me it isn't true."

"Why, I might lie to you."

"Why should you lie to me? What difference could it make to me whether you were straight or not? I just believe you—that's all."

His mood was lightening; not in joy, but as a man adrift on the ocean watches the coming day, glad at least that it is not dark.

"No," he muttered, "we don't need shams, Nel—you and I. We know—we've faced it all. I've come to find how far I've drifted—and to wonder what's beyond it."

"Sometimes I wonder," she answered simply; "but it puzzles so. I'd go crazy if I tried to find a reason for anything. But, Kid, you've changed." She

turned to him intently. "Seems like things hurt you so now."

He stirred at her guess; not to himself, all his life long, had he admitted that beneath his mordant play lay acute sensitiveness, a receptivity, a power of feeling hurts. These it had been needful from the first to deny and jest with—he had told himself long years ago that he had succeeded well.

"Changed?" he smiled. "I'm tired. No one thing has led me to it but just everything. And, Nel, I want to go—to break with things. You can't see, but seems that life lays before us, waiting like a black rat. And I want it different somehow."

He wondered if she knew the hollowness he felt, his crippled will, his confused good; it struck him as odd that he should try to guess at Nella's mind—he who had evaded her with gentle indifference the years of their friendship, who had accepted her always for what she was, as he had done all his world. "I want it di[illegible]." he went on. "Sometimes I think a woman co[illegible]e made me—it takes a good woman to hold a man out of what I've lived. But I had my chance—two chances. I've never told you, Nel, but there was Sylvia, and then Miss Wayne. You don't know what they meant for just a glimpse of what I might have been. I can't forget—that's why I'm going away. To make myself what they would have liked in a man—that' why I'm going."

She had risen in the dark with his recital, the confused vision that he tried to have her see, groping to ma[illegible] know. He heard now a glass clink on the sideboard as she set the decanter back. Then she filled

the glass again, with a smothered cry. He rose and caught her hand, so that the liquor spilled down their sleeves and on the marble of the sideboard.

"Go slow, Nel," he said. "Here—half of that!" But, eluding him, she drank the whisky with a sob, and wrenching free, left him brushing the stuff from his coat.

Nella went swiftly to the kitchen. Miss Granberry was down the block at Wilson's delicatessen and the child was asleep. In the dingy hall the gas burned dim.

The girl, clinging to the door-frame, saw the sodden window opening on the shaft, the cheap lace curtains, the dishes piled in the sink, the dirty clothes on a chair. The cooking smells assailed her; the window-panes were grimy; from the gloom beyond, fearsome shapes were pictured. A desperate fear clutched her heart. Yes, she would come to this—a parrot, a dying hyacinth in a lodging-house kitchen window; her hands huge, knotted; her hair gray, frowsy; her back bent—toiling over the stairs of days with great swashes of water, crawling out to a mean purchase of tea and soup; at night lighting the dim hall jets under the hideous wall-paper for drunken lodgers, washing her dishes from a lonely meal—to this—this, she would come! The years would crush her—all that brief youth gave, all her pitiful life held; her beauty faded, her vivacity dulled, her pulses yellowed—she possessed one thing—only one thing—and that she was offering, laying down uselessly in his brute dirt and squalor.

Yes, like a black rat it would come.

Already she was feeling old; and raising up her

white hands she shrieked fearfully in the silence—shrieked and reeled, falling over the table, so that the young man rushing from the hall, seized her, moaning, and dragged her from the kitchen.

"What's the matter?—are you hurt?" he cried, and she could only sob and moan, sinking lower, until, lifting her, he carried the limp form to his rooms, and laid her on the couch.

"What is it, Nel? What's the matter?"

"I don't know—I don't know!" she shuddered, closing her blue eyes tight, clenching her hands. "O, my God—let me go!"

But, kneeling, he held her wrists tighter, and she had to turn to brush her wet eyes against his coat.

"Never mind—be still," he murmured; but getting an arm loose she raised it about his neck and drew him closer until her full, hot lips were against his cheek.

"Don't you care!" she whispered, in her sobs. "It don't mean anything, Hammy—from *me!* Only I'm adrift now—all adrift!"

"Never mind," he repeated, holding her closer on the couch. "Don't you mind—somehow, Nel, you're brave."

"I'm just a leaf in the storm," she whispered, with the tug and falter at her swelling throat—"but you go on—you got to go on! I keep thinking of the Captain's Larry with his honor medal for saving that other fellow. You got to be as fine as he—it would be *grand* to think of you that way!"

CHAPTER XXI

Arnold came on Fred Weldy at the Star printing house in the closing days of the legislative session. The German greeted him with an awkward laugh, holding out a newspaper. He pointed to his picture among a row, the committee of investigation, and the members accused of accepting bribes in the racing scandal.

"Lillie says I look like a 'con,'" said the printer, "but I don't feel that way. I may be a dead one in politics, Ham, but I feel *right!*"

"That's a whole lot," laughed Ham. "I expect it'll hurt your business?"

"Sure," mused Fred. "My partner's scared to death, but Lillie says to buck it out. I'm the worst hated man at Sacramento. I never knew that everybody jumps a man as soon as he tries to be square. Shucks, what a row we raised, Ham, or you kicked me on to it! And I guess you're dead—you couldn't referee a dog fight in this town *now!*"

"I know." Arnold looked genially at him. "Fred, can you get me a job?"

Fred stared at the immaculate Ham. Never had he heard of Ham working. He hesitated; the matter was painful to his simple loyalty; he floundered and choked. "Work? I know a big printing shop that wants a hustler"—he took a card from his case—"but *you?* Work?—why you funny old skate!"

Arnold rubbed his dark chin and laughed. "I'll take this, Fred—and thank you. No more velvet for me—I'm down and out, but the only thing in a race is the finish! I'm broke, and Nel's broke, and Granny's broke—even the blue pup's busted!"

There was, indeed, sore need at the old house on the hill, for, since the closing of the Family Liquor Store and Sedaini's, most of Granberry's pitiful revenues from lodgers had gone. No more came the shawled wives and bareheaded girls to the grocery, nor the clerklings and mechanics to sit at Unc' Pop's back bar. He had gone across the bay to live with Fred Weldy, and Sedaini had been swallowed up in the Latin quarter. The corner came to be a house like Always Sunday, the mean little windows curtained, the padlock on the grocer's door, the sedate cleanness of the stairs leading above to Granberry's lodgings and the silence in Happy Alley where once all the kids had played. The block below was deluged in the rising tide of oriental life; Japanese students, shoemakers, employment agencies swarmed, and the renting agent told Miss Granberry that the corner could not long resist the invasion.

As the days passed, Arnold's idea of leaving town grew vague. At the end of the first week he had six dollars and fifty cents from his soliciting, and sitting on the balcony rail with Nella in the cool, shifty summer evening, they had laughed. Nella's eyes were heavy, she was dulled by the close rooms; she had lost her alluring luxuriousness, bespeaking now the lodging-house woman.

"Who sewed my sleeve?" Arnold asked, holding his

smoking jacket to the light. It was a bad job, indeed; the stiches long and slovenly.

"Pretty fierce, isn't it?" the girl muttered, and then defiantly: "I get wild with nothing to do. I wonder why I stick around here! I just have to sweep or do something, Ham."

He looked at the lamentable stitches; caught one, and unraveled the seam. Nella snatched at the sleeve. "Of course it wouldn't stay—I never sewed anything before. But you're away all day, and you look awful tired, Ham, in that ragged coat when you get home. Take it off—I'll try again!"

"It is rather bad," said he. "But I'm no captain of industry myself. In fact, I'm a good deal of a shine when it comes to business, Nel. I can talk the money out of men's pockets at the track, but I can't go into their offices and face them, trying to sell them something they don't want. I never felt so cheap in my life, and that's queer, seeing that I'm giving them a straight deal."

"Well, you keep on," she retorted, "keep on!"

He went forth to another week of hopeful but dispiriting effort. Arnold was indeed a failure at business; there was no place for him in the keen thrift of traffic. By Saturday his commissions amounted to five dollars and seventy-five cents. He showed the money to Nella and they both forced a laugh.

"I wore out a pair of eight-dollar shoes getting five dollars' worth of business," he told the girl with a humor of dismal exaggeration. "It's bad."

"Never mind," she retorted. "You tried—it's just grand!"

But the next night she met him with a curious diffidence in her careless eyes.

"I sold the little ring—I got forty dollars—the landlord's agent was here to-day. Now, what'll we tell the old lady?—that we won it at the races?"

"Tell her the truth—that we're broke," he replied; but the girl demurred, and lied indolently to Miss Granberry when she paid the rent on the first of the month.

Nella had settled down to a strange content at Granberry's, restless and idle as she was. She seemed waiting for the turn of fortune, careless, vacant of mind in her droll humors. The old lady was perplexed and doubting—but who was to judge and who condemn? She puzzled her weary old brain and then passed it by. She had done her part: she had cared for the fatherless, she had been patient with the drunken men, and given refuge to erring women. Surely her God would know. At any rate her path was easier for the doing.

Arnold quit the printing firm for a clerkship in the water company's office which paid fifteen dollars a week, and came home in high feather one night, his arms filled with groceries.

"What's the use of being rich when you can have everything you want?" he cried cheerfully, and the sharp-eyed old woman and the heavy-lidded girl smiled. Hammy was hard to understand these days of his labor. His nights were spent with the Captain, and they discussed the wars in Samar. The four of them would gather about the table, when the cloth was cleared, and over the ragged map of the islands the

dissembler built up the story of Bamboang. The Captain listened sagely, his fingers trembling with palsy, his soul aflame with brave artifices and phrases. At times, with easy mendacity, Arnold brought what purported to be telegrams and clippings, and the blinded veteran listened with many oracular throat-clearings and wise corrections.

But one night after he had gone to bed, his temples throbbing with a charge of the troop, which the liar had evolved in the great campaign, the three looked after him in a sort of fear.

"He's not so well," muttered Granny. "Suppose the troop-ship didn't come?"

"If it did," retorted Arnold, "things would be worse."

Nella stared at him. "What do you mean? Won't we all be glad to see his boy—a lieutenant with yellow stripes and a medal of honor?"

Arnold looked back at her startled; he had not dreamed that the deceit had grown so big. "Why, Nel," he muttered, "you—you—"

She laughed. "Seems like I know this Larry! I dream of him. Wouldn't it be fine to love a man like that? I've listened to you and this crazy old soldier talk, and I can just imagine him. Hammy, when's he really coming home?"

The young man looked again at her—what splendid vision was he building also, in this careless soul, with his great campaign, his triumphs and heroic deeds of the troopers over-sea? "Nel, don't you mind," he said. "Next month, I suppose, he'll come."

Meantime he was trying lamentably to be a clerk in

the water office, though his penmanship was abominable, his arithmetic a farce. The second week the secretary looked over his glasses and said:

"Arnold, are you the chap who was before the grand jury last fall?"

"Yes," answered the clerk.

"Indeed?" the other smiled.

The new employee worked long hours, sometimes collecting about the city in the dusty afternoons of the cool summer. He met old familiars of the town with enigmatic smiles or jesting indifference, but avoided them where he could. And the harlequin street forgot the renegade for other diversions. He was not one given to conscience; to himself he said he was tired—no more. Of Grace Wayne, as of Sylvia, he thought with curious weighings of impersonal sentiment. "No matter now," he would muse. "The card's wiped clean—everything's got to be *new!*"

Nella came one evening, to find Miss Granberry in the hall barricaded with ancient hat-boxes, lavender-smelling cases and clothes flung from closet and attic, agog with excited energy, dashing orders and protests. A miracle had come—indeed!

A wandering brother, sojourner of North sheep camps, unheard of for fifteen years, had broken his leg. He wrote from Victoria, and sent Granny fifty dollars, and would she come succor the luckless limb? Doubt, pleasure, dismay seized the old lady. For forty years she had not crossed San Francisco Bay. She was aghast at the adventure, then her kind heart rebounded to the lamentable brother. Yes, she would go—but the house? Mr. Hammy's laundry, the Cap-

tain's breakfast, the Cookhouse Kid? She looked askance at Nella's assurance—a girl whose idea of keeping house was to wash a handkerchief and stick it to dry on the window! But her telegram—she must get to the brother at once.

The neighborhood women—chiefly Mis' Wilson, who kept the delicatessen—sniffed at Granny's confiding the lodgings to Nella. They retired with head-shakings, and this decided Granny at once. All her fervent loyalty to her own flashed out: Nella it would be!

But she had a prodigality of cares to leave behind. "Now, dearie, will you remember this?" she would cackle over her packing—the milk bottle must be on the stairs, the scavenger man paid Wednesdays only, and the side rooms beyond the portières were to rent for two dollars and fifty cents the week—in the rear, for two—an infinity of directions. She paused once to bring forth the Japanese student's stunted hyacinth which should have bloomed months ago.

"It's coming, dearie," said the old woman, "slow, but see here, and there, pushing bravely through the mold! I'm going to leave it with you, and if I'm not back by Mr. Hammy's birthday on the twenty-sixth, you must give it to him—from *me*. Surely it will be in bloom then!"

Arnold found them in this gabble and throwing-about; the girl sitting on a trunk; the old woman, all her intense nature at once rebounding at this adventure, to her ears in clothes and stuffy accumulations. He was at once assailed with perplexities—the whole scheme of living for the four weeks Miss Granberry

would be gone was dinned into him—rote and rule such as she had evolved through the adjustments of an intricate poverty of fifty years.

Even then, it was with doubts that Miss Granny departed the next day on the Victoria steamer. Arnold saw her off, seated in her state-room her black silk mitts folded in her lap and the place reeking lavender.

Arnold went directly to his work of collecting the water rates after Miss Granny put to sea; it was late when he came up the Washington Street hill. Nella was in the tiny kitchen, which was a haze of blue smoke, her sleeves rolled up, a gay turban on her red-brown hair. The young man watched her for a moment before he came to speak cheerily. She looked up flushed, pleased, but a trifle anxious.

"The old fellow up-stairs isn't coming down. He don't feel well, and he's asking why the papers don't have any news about that battle. Let's go up to see him after dinner—he only wants some tea."

With the flaxen-haired child the two sat at the kitchen table. The meat was overdone, the canned tomatoes thin, the macaroni soggy. A curious constraint was on the group, though Arnold praised the cooking extravagantly, causing Nella to laugh, silly over his whims. But they missed the old woman's shrewd gossip; it was as if a place were vacant on the firing-line; the forlorn outposts drew closer, as though they stood in the dark, cheering one another through doubtful hazards.

The young man looked gravely at the girl across the table, at the waif by her side, at the dim gas above in Granny's kitchen.

"Nella, you must get out of doors more—you're losing your color. You must be in the air, and not have this dismal old place on your mind."

"Where'll I go?" she laughed. "I can't go around town, and I'd be frightfully lonesome at the park."

"Haven't you any friends—girl friends, somewhere?"

"No. You know how *women* are! I got to stay away. I'm all right—this place'll keep me busy. I feel more contented, some way or other."

"Sunday you take the kid and go across the bay to Sammy's—you need the outdoors, Nel."

"No—I don't want to. The country makes me lonely, and the old man's too sick. When'll his boy come back?"

"I don't know," muttered the dissembler, disconcerted.

"I fixed a room for him—the big east one looking over the harbor where he can see the transports off the Mission. Do you really think he'll care to live with us—an officer with a medal? The east room's pretty. I put in the best rugs and your lounging chair for him."

"Nel!" he retorted, startled—"for Larry Calhoun!"

"It's fine," she answered gaily. "I wonder what he'll think of *me*. Can't you hear a word from him? There's a letter come for you."

Arnold opened the envelope she gave him. It was brief. His services with the water corporation would not be required after the coming Saturday night. With a smile he handed the type-written sheet to the girl and watched her face harden beneath its import.

"Damn them!" she muttered, her eyes bright on him.

"Don't you care," he put in slowly. "I was looking for something of the kind. You see, the record I've got around town kills me with the big business houses. There's nothing said, but it's turned me away from a dozen situations, Nel. The company just discovered that I am the same Arnold who was mixed in the grand jury business—that's all. I'm a crook with them—that's merely a reasonable view of it."

"I know! Well, no matter—what are you going to do now?"

"I'll have to find something. And I've pretty well gone through the white-handed jobs. It isn't easy to find things I can do."

"I thought you were going to leave town?"

He looked uneasily at her, at the child, at the window of Granberry's kitchen. "Yes. But—well, I don't know. You see—" he stopped in some confusion before the intent of her eyes—"O, we'll get along all right. They can't keep me out of everything, you know."

"You said you were going to the hills?"

"I am."

"Look here," she retorted, "you go, Hammy. Don't let us be a drag on you. We can all get on."

"The house can't run without money."

"O, money! Money is easy. Here's these diamonds and my furs—they don't mean much, somehow, any more."

"No—no. I thought I'd sell the old piano and some of that china in my rooms."

"Your mother's pretty things? No; we can get on fine."

She rose and clattered the dishes with a laugh, pushing back her reddish hair which had tumbled about her brow. "Money—*I* can always get money—don't ever bother about that! You go to the country and be square."

"Go? Kid, did you ever think how alone we are? You and I up on this hilltop with a blind old man and a baby?"

She laughed in some confusion and hurried about the work.

After a while, in the silence, Arnold went to the attic rooms above, under the ancient gable.

The old man was asleep, the moonlight, through the window, aslant on his bushy brows, the scar above his eyes. The younger watched him a while intently; a wistfulness had come to the veteran's face—this waiting was surely long, the ending vague; and slowly the light was darkening. Only one thing stood in a splendor to the Captain's soul, and that was how the young fighting fellows had held the line at Bamboang. The other man had fed the story to him piece by piece; the veteran could describe it vividly as though he, the field marshal, had stood on the heights and directed the action. But it had become a thing that was sapping the imagination of the creator; Arnold felt at times that his soul was eaten hollow with the deceit—a mere shell of dreams.

Arnold went back to his apartments. Fred Weldy had asked him to go to the theater to-night. He came on Nella in the kitchen, and watched her, still the rest-

less and good-humored. Yet her youth was going—the gilded halls of light and laughter, of great imaginations, had darkened; they had become a hovel that encompassed her.

The black rat drew nearer. But rarely would she see; to her had been given lightness.

The man looked down on her. The motherless child had tramped in a flooded gutter that evening; its feet were wet and the girl had only now discovered it. The dim hall of the lodgings was still; there had been for three days no roomers except themselves. Arnold looked at his watch—he was to meet Weldy at the Columbia at eight o'clock. But he stayed irresolutely.

"Nel, I haven't touched the piano for seven months—I've hardly sung a note. You know my voice failed long ago. But suppose we get some music out of that dusty corner and just try it."

She looked up with a laugh, always her aimless, good-humored retort to the world—but he saw the pleased gratefulness in her eyes.

He went to his room and lit the lamp, which cast it into warm shadows; the marble Marquise on the piano vivid, white in the gloom. He searched among the music and went again to the hall seeking the girl.

She was still with the child, taking off its shoes and kneeling to wring the stockings, the dirty water dripping through the diamonds on her fingers.

CHAPTER XXII

The following week Arnold found a place on the water front, as tally clerk for a shipping firm. It would pay him eighteen dollars a week, which now, in the needs of the house on the hill, seemed munificent.

He came away under instructions to report the following day, and oversee the checking of produce as it arrived on the boats from up the Sacramento River. It was to be long night hours on the wharves, but he told Nella Free of his luck with enthusiasm—he had been about the town a week looking for work in vain.

For the first time in his life, Arnold had come face to face with the hostile social aspect—the complacent impudence of rebuff—which the suppliant for bread-labor ever meets from the vestigial tyranny of men's minds, for the dignity of labor is but a snug and easy platitude. The man who possesses may glut the cruelty the dumb races learned under the whips of forgotten kings on the man who must ask—the same fat soft hand that gestured to the slaves beaten to death as they shoulder-strained at Cheops' blocks waves complacently at the bread-needy to-day.

Arnold, in his need and inutility, reaped to the full his idle sowing—he had no weapons for these new hazards of fortune against which he now tried to make headway. The town, it seemed, within the month had forgotten him. He was now facing its indifference and

suspicion with nothing but his new simplicity of motive, and he saw how he had builded on nothing, had nothing, gained nothing. The friends of his other life could give him no aid in this; references would have damned him where they would not provoke a smile. But he kept on with the troubled seeking; at the house he had a droll cheerfulness, so that night after night they came to watch for him, the waif expectant near the head of the stairs, the Captain at the table, his hands crossed on the head of his cane, and the girl turning her face from the murk of the kitchen, with her idle laugh.

The old man disconcerted him one night; a hand trembling with palsy laid a smudged newspaper by his plate. "On the thirtieth they will be here," said the Captain calmly. "The *Sherman* sails this week from Manila, the Third Battalion is on board—my son's troop is coming home."

The younger man stared at the paper. Nella listened with curious absorption. It was a brief cablegram among the despatches to the war department; the Second Cavalry was returning. The veteran was quiet in his faith and surety.

"Lawrence is coming on the thirtieth," he repeated.

The Captain had been wistful these many weeks, patient with his brief questionings, eager in his reconstructions of the campaign; but wistful for a voice out of the silence. Now it had come.

"A stranger in the park gave me the paper," he added. "I could not see it, sir—my eyes are not so well. But they're coming home—those young fellows who did so well at Bamboang."

"And *he'll* be a lieutenant?" queried Nella. "Do you suppose he'll be in the parade up Market Street, like they always have—with a band?"

The Captain nodded, pleased, but rebuking. This was nothing—this woman's way of seeing things. Arnold went to his rooms leaving them discussing the matter, the Captain lofty, the girl in absorption, chattering, and then in fitful dreams. Alone, the graceless liar studied the matter. He had created a heroic presence in their minds—and now he faced an inexplicable dilemma.

What would he tell the Captain when the troop-ship was in the bay—what evasion offer Nella when the squadron rode the street?

After the old man had gone to bed, Arnold went to find Nella at her dishes. She was scarcely pleased at his telling of the position he had found.

"That's hard business, Hammy. It's a come-down for a fellow like you. I wish you could get away as you wanted to do. See here—when are you going?"

"Nel, you know I can't quit you and the Captain—and the old house—"

"But you'd better." Her blue eyes with their careless quizzing fell from his face. She went on in an altered voice: "You'd better—something may happen."

"What do you mean?"

"O, I don't know. Ham, yesterday the agent for some sort of society that takes care of stray kids was here—he was put on to us by that Wilson woman and those others in the block who look at me so. They have their suspicions of us, I suppose. That agent

talked about taking the kid away if it needed a home or anything. He was polite, but I knew!"

His face was serious as she went on: "You see he came spying around, and he caught me bad—I was smoking, and I guess I looked the *part*. Maybe," she laughed, "I'm not the sort to have charge of a baby!"

"What did you tell him?"

"I told him to go to the devil, and backed him out the door."

The young man stared at a little sweater the waif of the woods had worn; from another room his breathing came through the silence. He looked about the hall. The old house had a sort of Gipsy abandon; Nella was a happy-go-lucky housekeeper, a miserable cook; she idled most of her days over novelettes and theatrical magazines, rubbing her rings with her cigarette-stained fingers, but she had been watchfully kind to the Cookhouse waif, playing with him in the halls and on the porch, dressing him fantastically, and laughing over his serious, childish perplexities.

"Ham, I shan't give him up," she broke out; "I'd go wild without something to do. Sometimes the old man up-stairs talks so crazy, and I take Bill and skip down to the alley and sit in the sun. This house is spooky—and you're away so much!"

He watched the girl's restless hands. The third finger of the right was tied in a cloth. He caught her arm and drew her nearer and asked: "What's the matter?—another burn?"

"I just cut it a bit," she laughed, and the clumsy finger-stall fell off, showing the red scar. The young

man looked gravely at the finger, where, last night, one of her rings had been.

"Kid, you've sold the opal with the two diamonds, haven't you? You've paid some more of the bills, haven't you?"

"O, not much. Only that groceryman was here—I think Wilson got him excited about us—as though we were going to move or beat him some way. I just raised twenty on the opal—I have the ticket, and we'll get it back. And if we don't, it's all in the game. Who cares?"

He went down-town without further comment, and she wondered if he was angry. She sat up late to see him when he returned, but he came back to his rooms by the outside stairs, and went away in the morning before she had risen.

At wharf nine of the city front a small stern-wheel steamer lay with a line of stevedores crawling up the plank from her forehold under a cluster of electric lights. Jute bags of potatoes and onions, crates of asparagus and produce from the island farms of the Sacramento delta, they brought out, wheeling them away to the recesses of the covered dock. A curt manager had explained Arnold's duties, and at eight o'clock the same night he reported to stand by the plank and check off the stuff as it was unloaded from the *Juanita*.

It lacked a few moments of eight when he arrived to relieve the other tally clerk, and he lounged against the sacked stuff on the wharf, watching the laborers' trot in the dust from the hold, as the steamer slowly heaved on the tide—Italians, Negroes, Hindoos and

Mexicans—a mongrel breed, dulled and sweat-smelling. Among these, he, a fastidious fellow of the town, had come to be—his world had easily forgotten him, and to the new way of life he was untried.

He looked at his watch and turned to go along the wall of sacks past the office to the boat. A man came from the office to pass him in the narrow way; then stopped, his shoulders stiffening, his eyes lightening with an intent challenge. It was Banway, the Humboldt woodsman, whom Arnold had not seen since what was to have been his wedding-day.

The big fellow watched him in silence for a time. Then, with portentous quietness, he said: "I wonde'd if I'd eve' see you!"

"I'm working here," answered the other. "How are you, Louisville?"

"Don't talk friendly to *me!* I came down here a month ago to kill you."

"Yes? But you can't understand. And Sylvia couldn't explain. Do you see her up there?"

"Trinity? She's neve' been home."

"Never been home? I sent her back—where is she!"

"Where would she be?" The woodsman's eyes narrowed malignantly. "You threw heh off! Where was there fo' heh to go?—home, robbed, disgraced?"

"Where is she?" repeated the town man steadily. "Here, keep back—" the other was pressing on him—"I tried to explain."

"Arnold, I'd have shot you, only I promised I wouldn't! I been fumin' round weeks thinkin' how I could get at you—God knows, I give it up—short o' killin' you. It'd only be fool-like to curse you!"

"Yes, there's nothing to say. I'm sorry—that's all."

"Sorry!"

"Banway, how is she—tell me?"

"She's gone insane, here—in the city where you le heh! Mo', she'll die."

They stared at each other, the one whitening to his lips; the other flaming, rubbing his hands together to still their desire.

"No," whispered Arnold, "you're fooling—she's not—" The other's misery convicted him. "Where is she?"

"At a good woman's—she was you' friend once. Maybe you *know*."

"Miss Wayne?" His swift thought went to the night she had dismissed him—had it all happened so long ago? "I know, now—" he said mechanically—"O, I know, now!"

The other advanced on him in inextinguishable hate. "What's it to you?" he cried. "Heh soul's dead, an' what's it to you?"

The town man turned aside. He wond ed why he was muttering that he was sorry—what, ..deed, could words do? The woodsman watched h face harden in the shadows—it seemed a cynic's indifference.

Arnold heard a step on the planking—a blow on the cheek sent him against the wall of sacks. From the impact he recoiled, crouched like a fighter and met the next rush with hammering lefts and rights, clenching and b uising the Northerner's face with short-arm jabs which the untrained man was powerless to avoid. But Banway burst through the boxer's defense; again they clenched and twisted in the narrow way between the

wall and the dock's edge, silent, except for the strain and choking draw of their lungs, reeling, struggling nearer the water. Arnold's strength was spending. Though he had split Banway's lip and eye, the woodsman was lifting him mightily, shift as he would; and then, crushed in each other's arms, they went over the dock by the steamer's bow into the plunging flood-tide.

Arnold had an indistinct recollection of striking an iron-bound splicing of the head-line as they sank. He struggled in the woodsman's grasp, and then felt the big fellow sinking limply through the water as the tide heaved them in the space between the dock wall and the ship. Down this space came the shouts of men running on the plank, and kneeling to look into the darkness. From the confusion of electric lights, rafters, men's faces on the gang-plank, a rope shot down; Arnold grasped it desperately until a mighty pull swung them against the piles, where he clutched at the slime and mollusk incrustations, still holding to the other man, who began to struggle as his bleeding head came above the water. Instinctively he, too, caught the rope, and with his enemy, hung in the swing of the tide. Men were scrambling down the piling.

"Got a-hold?" some one shouted. "Ready, up there —heave!"

They hauled the woodsman up until he stumbled bewilderedly across the plank to the dock. He beat the water and mud from his clothes as Arnold came after him, and grimly they watched each other, with no softening nor approach.

"God's sake, Louisville," exclaimed the mate of the *Juanita*, "what you fighting about?—who started this?"

"It's the new tally clerk," whispered a young man from the office.

The mate, the manager of the shipping firm, and the stevedores, looked on the two wet and bleeding men, staring savagely at each other.

"Who started all this?" demanded the manager.

"I did," growled the woodsman. "I'd a-killed him sure—it's fo' a girl he knows!"

They looked again at the combatants. The mate spoke to the manager who regarded Arnold, soaked, bruised and dirty, with rising suspicion. He was harassed, peevish, the hour late, and he had not been to dinner. "Who is he?—where'd you get *him?*" he demanded of the subordinate.

"Some bum came along," whispered the clerk. "Mr. Bacon hired him—I dun-no—he was kind of a well-dressed bum."

Never in his dilettante theatricals had Arnold a better make-up. He looked the part. And the dock-men knew Banway of the lumber schooner trade.

"Here, what *you* got to say?" cried the manager angrily.

"Nothing—" retorted the young man, "not a word."

"You git off this wharf—we don't owe you nothing yet. I don't want no fighting around here. You git!"

Arnold glanced from the manager to the curious faces of the stevedores; he had a strange sensation of being thousands of miles away, in a foreign port—alien, friendless, alone—to him would be dealt an alien's justice. He looked over his clothes, the only decent suit he had of late, now smeared with slime, dock-dust, wet, torn and bloody, his hat gone, his col-

lar ripped from the band—yes, he was the bum now, penniless, without a hand to grasp or a place to turn.

The friends he had had were the friends of debonair dressing, of the light ways of the town, the smiles of women of the cafés, or idling sunny afternoons on street or race course. But these he had given up in some foolish way or other—now, he was the ragged and hungry water front bum, out of a job, kicked off the docks. He turned from them and went to the street.

Through the deserted wholesale quarter, and then Chinatown, his steps led to the house on the hill. Above the turmoil of the fight, above even the bitterness of Banway's contempt, because of Sylvia Spring and her suffering at his hands, came the thrust of failure. Yes, he was down now; he had led the gray wolves of the town, dragging down their man here or there to the killing—but he had come to be the renegade, and the pack had leaped to throttle him. He had turned, seeking what might be fair or of worth, and these had rejected him; the city had requited his evil with evil.

When he reached the untenanted corner he leaned against the forlorn window of the store and wiped the slime from his face. The water drained from his clothes, but he did not feel the chill, even in the bleak wind; the tumult of blood and his thoughts racked him hot. He tried to visualize Sylvia as insane, dying; he tried to say, as he had said, that it did not matter, to brutalize his soul and smash out the picture—so much of mean and melancholy failure had since come that he must forget all together. But through the humility of his heart there shot a new suffering, a desperate

grief. She seemed now the one actuality of light he had ever known, a soul peering at him through a veil, but in no reproach. She had loved him purely.

As he stood acute with this memory Nella called him and he did not answer for a time. When she repeated it, he said: "Yes, but don't come down—I'll be there."

His voice betrayed him; he was wont to come with a cheery greeting to them all. She appeared on the stairs and he must explain something.

"Nel, I've lost the job. I've had a fight, too."

She had never seen him so gripped from within, but she only said: "Boy, you're hurt. Come on home."

He shook off the touch on his sleeve and started away: "Don't wait for me. I'll be late."

But she hurried after him. "What's the matter? Have you killed some one?"

"Go back!" he retorted and roughly left her. But though he almost ran to evade her, to be alone with his remembrance, the girl followed and came on him across the street from the Albemarle. He looked at the yellow-curtained windows of the café, the lights on the table, the clean people at this cheery affair of dining. A year ago he had been as well-ordered to this tolerant life as they. And he looked about at her, at himself, wrecked, alone with this girl who clung to him, who had neither an understanding heart nor spiritual strength. She had become unkempt with the ways of the lodging house, unpretty with a pallor stealing on her, useless, weak—a leaf in the storm. And with a resurgence he saw her the symbol of all he had lived, made for himself, the satire of his talents prostituted,

of ambitions crushed—failure he had made of it all and this girl was the symbol.

Her voice came to his fever: "Let's go. What's the use of this?"

"Nel," he muttered, "you knew this and you never *told* me!"

"Yes. What good would it do? They were against you all—Miss Wayne and your friend who wears such stunning clothes—they're a thousand miles above it, and no matter what you tried they'd never understand." She took his arm again in her pleading: "But don't you mind—you can go on—O, you must, and to the North like you said." She tightened her hand: "See here—you must have loved her."

"No. It was something more than that. I caught at her, trying to get back. I never could raise myself alone. Well, you can't understand!"

No, she couldn't understand. He couldn't fight the city; he had been one to drift with its pleasuring, the lilt of young life through its amazing intricacies, eager for its adventures—he had lived it all and now was done, but it had broken his man's will, shaken his courage, beaten him. Yes, he had jested too long, uncaring of the better way; now the path back was lost.

"No," he went on, staring at the lights, "what can you know? What can any one know?"

But with little inarticulate endearments, brushing the slime from his bruised cheeks, smoothing the hardness from his mouth, she clung to him, glad for this word after the terror of his repression.

CHAPTER XXIII

Nella went about the small duties of the house the next week more silent, curiously watching Arnold's moods, more gentle in her haphazard caring for the moonfaced waif and the old man. But at length she could again laugh in her Gipsy abandon to him when he came back from his fruitless answering of advertisements for mean clerkships and canvassers' positions in suburban towns for which he had neither aptitude nor experience. He had gone to the superintendent of the Mutual Bank Building and asked for work, he told her one evening.

"You'll have to have better clothes in a bank," she said doubtfully.

He smiled. "It isn't built yet—merely a hole in the ground. I tried to get a job mixing cement and they said I couldn't—I didn't belong to the union."

She laughed, marveling at the thing, however. "We're in for it. Here's the soldier man coming back, and anyhow by the fifth we'll have to move. A big Chinaman has bought this corner to make it over to a gambling-house."

The young man looked at the rooms crowded with the stuff from his father's one time home and to which, in his years of army service, he had added the loot of Philippine towns and of Peking, along with the accumulations of later years.

"I think I'll sell the furniture—that sideboard is heavy stuff—it'll fetch something."

"It was your mother's, wasn't it?"

"Yes."

"And all those pretty things—the silver and china? No—no—don't you!"

"Nel, I'm broke."

"Well," with her elbows on her knees she looked at him, "I can do something. I know a girl at the White House store; maybe I could get in there!"

"No, you'll have to stay a while. Who'll take care of the Captain and the kid?"

"That's the other thing I was going to tell you. That Wilson woman, who tells everybody I'm tough, got the officer of the Home Finding Society up here again to look us over. He asked all about the kid and me, and where Granny'd gone, and he's going to make a report or something. He mumbled something about the court, and all the old hens in the block got around him on the corner."

"Don't worry. They can't take the kid. When Granny gets back, we'll make some new arrangements—" he broke off, staring doubtfully at her puzzled face. If Granny did not return—what then? "Nel," he muttered, "what'll you do when the old establishment here goes to pieces?"

She thrust out her small foot, twisting the brilliant beaded slipper so that it sparkled in the light. "I never bother—what's the use of thinking about myself? I've been funny lately, Ham. I've been just happy here, trying to cook and listening to the Captain growling away about the battles. He's getting so he isn't

pompous with me, and thinking women are foolish—he's blind and can't tell whether I rouge my cheeks or not! To-day I took his skinny old hand and put it on my face and asked him if I *did*. It made him laugh—the first time I ever made the old soldier man laugh!"

She swung her foot restlessly from the table top, still admiring the beaded slipper, and then looked with disdainful pity at the cuts on her hands. She had smiled through this disastrous experiment, her eyes burning, her fingers soiled in the greasy kitchen; through a thousand failures fretting her temper, dulling her youth.

"We're nearing the end," Arnold answered irrelevantly. "I'm broke. But, Nel, I've been offered a place worth a hundred a month."

She cried out with a child's joy, "Where?"

"Playing the piano at Sheehan's. I met Ferreri to-day—he can fix it."

The girl got from her perch and came to him with a hard grimace—a new, surly look, a cat cornered and feverish to fight its hates: "No," she growled, "no!"

"Nel, I'm drifting back. Something's taken the heart out of the fight. I thought things would help a fellow to be decent, but nothing does. I was with the old gang to-day—the race-track crowd—and they cheered me. I tell you, I've failed at trying to be decent."

She suddenly put her hand on his shoulder with a brilliant, intent study, her blue eyes narrowing. "A piano player in a dance-hall? No, you don't. I'll go on the town myself first!"

He turned to her a face as hard as her own. "I'd kill you."

She relaxed seriously from his hands and stared down, her brow wrinkling. She bit one of her small scarred fingers, and then laughed joyously.

"O, boy, let's not care! I can drift, because things can't hurt me. But you—it's different. You got to be like I dream of the Captain's Larry—the fellow who got the honor medal. Honest, Hammy, I'm in love with him!"

The dissembler started as he always did at the portent of this obsession in her and the Captain. He drew Nel to him, holding her hands. "I wish you wouldn't talk that way. I wish there was a Larry—if there were only some one you would care for!"

"Yes," she muttered, "everything's different when there's some one to care for!" Then her old mood came back. "O, who the devil cares about our souls? We don't need to be happy. A man can just go on and be square as he can, whether there's any place like Heaven or not. And for me, I'm *almost* happy. I'm changing. When Larry comes, maybe it will be a great thing for us all. Waiting for him has kept me straight and kind, maybe. O, it's wonderful to care for some one!"

The liar sat back, trying to clear the astonishing dilemmas of his creating, this confusion of real lives and phantom faiths about him.

"You got to go on!" Nel added, laughing in his somber face. But when he had gone, and the hours drew to midnight in the quiet house, with only the little clock in the kitchen, and the tired child's breathing, she went restlessly from room to room. At last, on the stairs below the Captain's apartment, she sat waiting,

shivering at times in the chill and drawing her frayed silken skirts about her.

"It's an awful tangle," she muttered, "he's beaten—beaten, everywhere. It's so still to-night—like when men kill themselves."

She sat two hours, crouched, staring from a window over the side balcony at the trades fog drift across the sky. The glow down-town made of it huge, twisting ghosts above the city and the silence on the hilltop was acute.

At three o'clock Arnold came home. He had been drinking for the first time in months. Nella met him with no surprise. She went before him to his rooms, took his hat and the fine top-coat which had concealed his shabby suit; and then, as he sat before the table, she pushed back the thin curls from his brow.

"Kid," she said, "what did you do it for?"

He smiled slowly at her from the confusion of his heated brain and took her hand from the table's edge.

"I struck a queer crowd to-night," he answered quietly. "Did you ever hear of Oregon Slim?"

"Is he that big con man who's doing time at Folsom?"

"He's out now and back in the old hang-outs where Stillman and I used to have him line up some of the Pacific Street vote. Well, I met him to-night. He was surprised to see me down and out—and he made me a proposition."

"Yes," Nella said, with the same intent.

"Do you want to know?" he demanded.

She was silent and he laughed briefly. "A hold-up. He knows when his man will have the goods—and has

planned a getaway. I told him I'd consider and let him know to-night."

"Well," she retorted, "the town's broke you—when you'll stop to listen to that!" She slipped from the table, came to him, clasped her hands about his shoulder, looking up attentively. "Yes, that's the way we go. You just drift down and nothing stops you. I knew you were ready for any desperate game—and I'm not straight myself and can't help you." She laughed with forced nonchalance. "O, well, suppose I just go my own way to the devil and you go be an out-and-out crook? Just suppose?"

"You can't do that," he muttered. "I didn't say I was either."

"But it's creeping on you. And, O, you're not a man for that! You got to keep on square, somehow. I've been sort of proud of you! Just proud, like you were my brother—only that!"

"Nel," he whispered, and put his arm about her slender shoulder, in his eyes a brother's gentleness, "I've never cared a deal for women—but they're all splendid somehow!"

"Am I?" she answered, a curious hesitance to her laugh. "No one ever told me so in all the world!"

Then laughingly, in one of her wilful whims, she caught up the hand of the North woods waif and trailed the child from the room. "Come, Babe, don't mind that man. I ain't afraid for him after all—he *couldn't*—just for you and the old soldier man and me, he couldn't!"

That night at bedtime she hung about the child's neck the little silver crucifix that her young sister had

sent her from Notre Dame—the sister she had not seen in six years and who knew nothing of her except that badly written and brief letters with money came at uncertain intervals to the convent's head.

Arnold discovered the trinket on the child's breast the next day, and covered Nel with confusion by his query.

"What do I want with a fool cross like that?" she retorted. "Crosses and little gods made out of silver? It's all right for your religious friend—she used to be impressive in that black silk robe with the little gold cross on a little gold chain. Do you remember?"

"Let's forget," he answered quietly. "That's done, too."

His tone drove the lightness from her, but she went on. "I don't know. You're thinking of her, Hammy—of her and of all the decent women you ever knew—women who can laugh without fear of anything. Yes, you're in a sort of dream of them. And it's all a mystery to me. Sometimes I think you loved one of them—that Sylvia, or Miss Wayne. Or maybe it's just because they're different—something that might have helped and you think is lost to you."

"Yes, I think that's it. A man needs that. He's got to think of women that way if he's ever to get back a better way."

She looked at his introspective mood. "There were two good women," she went on. "And one or other of them—you can't forget—you loved her." And then she laughed in her old refusal to be held to a sober mood. "O, well, I can't help—I'm just careless Nel!"

She slipped away, leaving him with a sense of that

meaningless pathos in women, the myriad procession who found nothing and as meaninglessly passed, their laughter echoing through the ages, hiding the inexorable tragedy, the infinite hunger of their souls.

Another night, after the Captain was asleep, Arnold came to sit by the cleared supper table where the girl was sewing.

"What's that?" he asked presently.

She laughed flutteringly. "O, just a little spread for your dresser! To take the place of that dirty thing. I'm learning a new stitch from Kohamma, the Japanese shoemaker's wife, down the hill."

He took the linen, cheap, handsoiled, miserably worked—even his man's eyes recalled much better things in the tawdriest shops. The girl had pricked her finger, her red-brown hair was over the cloth, and he saw the net of lines woven below her lashes. Her hands were small, unequal to the clean gripping of the world of work. She suddenly laid one beside his own and laughed aimlessly. Then she lifted his; across the palm were purple abrasions.

"What have you been doing to-day?" she whipped out, keen as a fox. *"This?"*

"Got a job at the new bank building—I'm a cement mixer's helper."

The girl sprang up and away to survey him. "I noticed white on your clothes. Why, you dear old fool—I won't have it!"

But looking at him, she came again to lay her kitchen-roughened hand by his; and suddenly, in a burst of laughter, she kissed his brow, the tears in her blue eyes.

"O, don't mind me! I'm just Nel, who's happy when it's sunny, and every one's good-humored!"

Outside the night fog thickened, the hill was dull. After a time they heard a sound, a fumbling, and the Captain, his coat open, showing his hairy breast, groped in. The old man's eyes were turned brightly to them in the lamp's glow, but Arnold sprang up with a cry—for four days the veteran had not left his bed for sheer weakness.

The soldier warned him with a prophetic finger.

"Hear that? The troop-ship's in the bay!"

They heard the moan of the siren through the silence. The old man saluted.

"Sir," he added, "will you have my sword for me to-morrow? Will you go with me to meet the boy?"

"The *Sherman* will not be here until Thursday, Captain. That's only the fog-horn off the Point."

But the Captain shook his head. "It's the troop-ship's whistle. I have listened now, three days. To-morrow we'll go meet them—those young fighting fellows who did so well at Bamboang."

He turned triumphantly and went to his room.

"Thursday?" muttered Nella, her eyes brilliantly on the younger man. "As soon as that? An officer with yellow cavalry stripes—what'll I *wear* for him?"

Arnold's face darkened; he was gripped with formless doubts. Night after night he had held them, raised them, creating the rôles and playing the parts in the drama of Bamboang—first recklessly, ardently; then wearily, in confusion, before the old man's eagerness, the girl's absorption. The reckoning had come—the dream fortress where he had fought for them so long

was crumbling. His mind was busy with futile inventions. What should he say when the troop-ship lay at anchor in San Francisco Bay?

Nella brought a letter to the table, tossed it to him. "What do you think?" she said idly. "Granny says her brother's laid up for a year and she can't tell when she'll be back. She said we'd better give up the house and sell everything for her and do just the best we could." He caught her eye roving over the familiar walls. "It sort of hurts me, Kid," she muttered. "This is more like home than I ever knew!"

He nodded. Yes, it had sheltered them, the grim ghost of a house on the hillside; around it the fogs and rains had battered since the town had stood. It seemed that of late no one came there, few passed the decaying block—they were cut off, clinging to the place as to a gray rock watching the menace of the sea.

"Home!" he said. "It's been like that."

The round-faced infant waddled to Arnold's chair; he drew it up to the arm and sat it there. "You little devil—I wonder what the tough old game's got for you some day? Who'll play square with you and see you through afterward? Somehow, he likes me, Nel—he and the pup."

"Who don't?" she murmured apathetically. "It's like when you used to stroll into the old places, the gayest and the best-dressed of them all—they'd all be glad just because you'd come."

He wondered at the sweetness of her praise; he wondered what faint ray he might have cast from his life to other lawless spirits in the darkness, what good he might have flung away that had found lodgment.

"Just glad because you came." Perhaps that was something. In the silence the girl stretched the silly little cloth across the table. "I wish I had some clothes left," she said listlessly. "I'll be a fright to have a man like that around the house—an officer with the medal of honor." Then she threw her shoulders back and laughed: "Tell me, Hammy, am I as pretty as I used to be?"

"Prettier," he answered. "Seems like there's something new about you. Nel, it's strange we're here—you and I caring for an old man and a baby. Do you know what day this is—it's the Burns Handicap. Just a year ago to-day I placed a bet for you and brought the winning ticket back to you in your red machine—sixteen hundred dollars—and that night you flung a thousand away on Kid Brannan's first big fight."

"Gee!" her old baffling laugh rang out, "and to-night we're broke! O, what a game! And it just seems like I'd been happy here!"

"That's the strangest thing," he answered; "just to watch you—to try to believe it's Nel Free—and yet I can't see you've changed. Good God, what a game! I wonder where we're drifting? Nel, if you only cared for some one!"

"I'm in love," she mocked; "that lieutenant with the medal. It's grand to care for some one—it's the greatest thing in the world!"

She looked over some waists and hats the next morning, musing in doubt. Some she threw aside, but one she studied over. "But it won't do. I wish I

hadn't pawned so many things. If I only had one decent street gown!"

At ten she went to Bernice Murasky's apartments at the Clifford. The Jewess had greatly changed, dressing indolently in an alcove off her sleeping-room. She had never looked so well, so contented, wearing an elegant wrapper. On her table was a mass of wild lupine, smelling of the sea, lightening the clean wall tints and the pink and white bed.

Nella looked apathetically about this place, sweetened by the sun, perfumed; exhaling and completing the soft allurement, the daintiness that suggests to women's fancies, the cupid arch over the ineffable presences of love.

Bernice was surprised: she had not seen Nella for weeks. She was suspicious, as women are, when their kind come with obvious, but inexplicable motives, concealing it with patronizing interest, but ferreting out surmises of each other.

Nella was ill at ease. She asked and replied to questions, each hovering about the other's furtive defenses, alert against reprisals. The visitor's eyes fixed on a jewel-box of heavy silver; and then on a great beetle of diamonds against a black velvet bodice, which had been thrown over a chair from last night's wearing—a thing bigger than the pearl butterfly she had once owned, and which had been sold long ago from the house on the hill.

"Bernice, you've got some lovely things. I saw Mannie once, and he said you and Ferreri were going to be married."

"Maybe—this fall. Louis is making lots of money.

He's got a new machine. His company has got the supervisors cinched, and the saloon men scared to death. They're all customers *now*. He and Stillman are pretty thick—that's it. You still living with the old lady? They say Ham Arnold's gone all to pieces. He was a fool to quit politics when he did—just when Stillman got the town all tied up. Where's Ham now?"

"O—home!"

"Some one said he was with the Mutual Bank—down in the foundations," the Jewess laughed, "working from the ground up!"

Her inflection, the lift of her shoulders, the suspicion of a luxurious, cat-like content were each lent to that subtle under-wisdom of satire with which women bite one another. Nella turned restlessly away; she would have sold her soul if the chance had offered rather than broach her errand—another moment and it would be impossible.

She burst abruptly on Miss Murasky's solicitude.

"Look here, Bernie; I'm having a new gray suit made at Calleau's, but I can't get it until Saturday. It cost ninety-five, but that's all the good it does me now. I want to go down-town to-day and I'm kind of short of things. Could I take that blue street dress for the afternoon?"

"It's gone long ago. But you need something? Kid, I've got pretty stout, but say—how's that etamine"—she was searching in the closet—"this is tight for me—it's old anyhow. Can you use it?"

The other girl examined the gown: "Yes—yes—can I? And if I had a hat—"

"Here's this black—you'd look good in it if you only

had more color. You didn't used to have to put on so much rouge. Now it sort of sticks out on you. What's up—got something on to-night?"

"O, I'm just going down-town! I got a friend—an army fellow I used to know. Maybe we'll eat at Paul's."

"Kid, you're getting thin. You're a fool, Nella. You used to have everything you wanted. Now, what are you getting out of life?"

"I'm all right. You ought to see that swell gray I'm having made. Can I keep this until Sunday?"

"Sure. As long as you want. Do you need anything else?"

"No, I'm all right." The visitor was rolling her treasures in a paper, speaking with a difficult humility, for this subordination to her dependent of old days suddenly crushed her as no other revelation could have done. "Why don't you come over the hill and see us? It's awful quiet at Granny's."

"I'm pretty busy—I go somewhere with Louis' machine, most every afternoon, or else some of the girls come in. I should think you'd just go crazy alone in that tumble-down old house!"

"O, we have fun! When I get that tailor-made—"

"Come over and dine with me some night. We'll go down to Green's and see if any of the old crowd hang out there now. Wally's got a new song published and he made a lot of money out of it this time. Everybody seems to have got on, of all that old bunch, except Ham Arnold."

Miss Murasky was shaking out the black velvet with the diamond beetle so that its gleams were in the

other girl's eyes as she turned at the door. "Will you come over?"

"O, sure." But each knew that she would not—it would be too conclusive a triumph if Bernice could flout her shabby friend about the midnight cafés where once the shop-girl had been the dependent. "Bernie," went on Nella, "do you ever go to the shows and operas like you used to be so wild about in the old days?"

"Do I?" Bernice held the door as the other girl paused in the hall. "Nel, I'm as crazy as ever. I blow every cent I get on the theaters. I heard Melba last week in concert—every one of them. It was just like a silver string covered with pearls and diamonds falling from her lips. O, if I could sing that way—if I only *could!*" She smiled brilliantly from the door. "O, we'd be happy and we'd be good if we had everything we wanted!"

CHAPTER XXIV

The *Sherman's* coming had been anticipated for a week. Public committees had planned a great reception for the troops returning from the Philippine campaigns; already the city was decorated. Market Street, up which the soldiers would march from the water front, was forested with banners, while huge buntings overhung the cross thoroughfares, and the buildings were rosetted with medallions of the republic.

The gray, slurred street was now brilliant, bizarre, palpitant above the kaleidoscopic crowds dissolving and re-forming along the roped curbs, craning and peering past the police down the distance to the ferry under the red and starry tumult of the morning.

Through these throngs—these good-natured, mercurial San Franciscans, for ever young, for ever hopeful and easily amused, eager for motion, fascinated by colors, attuned to the unusual, as generously alert to the largeness of the heroic as they were careless of its common duties—Arnold and the Captain made a slow way. The old man had passed a sleepless night. He was up early, groping about the room for his sword with the faded sash, his coat with the brass buttons and the high-crowned hat with its tarnished cord. They could not quiet the veteran's excitement; protesting, in a secret bewilderment, the younger man consented to lead him to the parade. The troop-ship had come from

quarantine at daybreak; at nine o'clock the soldiers had disembarked.

Arnold went to his rooms before they left for the event. He found Nella before his dresser where was the best mirror in the house. She laughed extenuatingly, rubbing a delicate color to her cheek; her lips were full and rosy, her eyes bright. She brushed out the last suggestion of a freckle, shrugging her shoulders and smiling in the glass.

"Will he be here by dinner?" she asked, between the pins in her mouth. "I'd better get a good roast, eh?"

"Nella, suppose he should not come? The Captain's worked up so that I don't know exactly what to tell him."

"Shouldn't come? Why shouldn't he come?"

"You see a wounded man—well, you can't tell anything about it in this army business." The liar turned dispiritedly away. "Where are the Captain's gloves—the ones with the gauntlets? He won't start without them."

On the street the long sword impeded the veteran's progress. He stopped. "It might expedite the march, sir, if you would carry this." He unclasped the webbed belt with its tassels of the Civil War. "I am not so sure—so strong—thank you, sir. Now, we shall advance."

They came within hearing of the crowds along the line of ropes and the old man stopped again, his mustaches twitching, his eyes staring.

"It seems that I can see a little clearer. It's only a blur of color—but isn't that the flag, sir?"

"It's only an awning, Captain. We can't get much nearer the street; the crowd's too dense."

But the Captain was satisfied to stop by a corner in an eddy of the clamor. "You can tell me when he passes. He should be with his troop and not with the invalided men."

"Captain, suppose he did not come with the troop —his wound, you know—"

"An arm gone? A mere scratch. He wouldn't leave the squadron—those young fellows who did so well at Bamboang!"

Arnold turned wearily away.

Erect the Captain stood, leaning his sword between his clean, square-toed shoes, the button of the Loyal Legion in the lapel of his blue coat.

Under his gray brows, with the scar of Kenesaw, his eyes blinked at the brightness. The passers looked curiously at them—the old man in the uniform he had worn in the triumphal march past the capitol in '65, the young man holding to his arm quietly listening to the fine morning life. Down the street, under the forest of banners and medallions, alive in the breeze and sun, the burst of the march drew nearer, a fitful theme on the wind, now lost, now clear, over the press and shuffle of the crowds, until its gladness rode high and far, meeting the roar of the cheering as the surge of the sea grapples the ebb-tide at a river's mouth.

The Captain was silent in the throng. Arnold drew him to a lamp-post and then clambered to the flange, so that he could see over the people. By his face was the brown foot of a boy clinging above, his toes twisted in the iron work. The young man could see the police

platoon, a smooth machine fitting between the massed curbs as in a groove, passing; and then the vibrating, slurred opaqueness of the drum heads before the flag of the republic and the blue standard of a regiment of state infantry. Behind the mounted officers a tall lieutenant marched at the company's flank, as the ranks of dirty khaki, the scruffed, gray leggings in quick cadence, licked up the asphalt of the street.

Silent, erect, elbows close in company front, their burned faces grim under the rakish hats, the sun aglint on the ugly little rifle tips, came the Californians back from this last Argonautic expedition of the restless West, the high, final crest of the wave of the white races circling the globe against the dark—the outpouring of the Aryans through dim ages and from mysterious spaces, here, now, finding—as some American sentry paced a lonely island shore peering through the moonlight toward the coast of Asia—the end of the adventure, for there stood the portent of the East.

"The shouting, sir?—what is it?" The old man was clutching Arnold's leg.

"The infantry, Captain. Wait—here *they* come—the Second—my old squadron! There's Bemis of Troop B!"

The dark-faced fellow was shouting in the roar of voices to a swarthy corporal of the cavalry. Another rider saw him, lifting a gauntlet so that his yellow chevrons flashed in the sun—it was Creedon with his pranks and wit! And back to Arnold the old life surged, the sights and sounds and smells of camp and barrack and outpost—Samar, Cavite, China and the Forbidden City—the guidon colors and the bugle-calls,

the sweated leather and the good sea. He saw again the white curve of the surf on warm beaches, the nipa thatches and the spread of canvas along opal-skyed lagoons; old friendships, fights and loves through tropic days and luminous nights, youth fervent and far-wandered. And now the troop had passed him by; he was alone with the town that had cracked his bones, licked his soul hollow of great dreams, fattening on his needs and weaknesses. O, but he was young, he would go back—he would live again!

The old man was tugging at his knee, his blinded eyes upturned. Very patient he had stood in the tramping and the blare, old marches and forgotten songs beating an immemorial cadence in his heart, though the splendor long had darkened.

"Did you see him, sir?" the Captain quavered, for he knew the riders had passed. "Who led the squadron?"

Arnold looked away as he felt the father's touch. The regulars were far along, infantry again were passing, the low forest of black little muzzles tilting through the cold hard sunshine of the San Francisco street. He saw the crowds engulfing the rear of the last company.

"Captain, I suppose he's with the hospital men. But I told you he might not come—his wound, you know—"

"Only an arm, sir? He should be with his troop for this last march."

"Well, we'll see. Let's get out of here—we can rest a moment in the park."

He led the soldier from the throngs a block to Union Square where they found a seat along the sward, with

the swallows twittering in the acacias about the Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument. The old man's step was heavy; he laid his sword across his knees and wistfully strained his eyes up to the bronze Victory rising from the marble shaft. "He can reach the house in an hour from the Presidio, can he not, sir?"

"Yes," muttered the younger man, in fear at some change in the father's face. "We'll go home—we'll await him there."

The Captain sighed peacefully. An hour is nothing when one has waited a lifetime; one can give that to the honor of the service.

He was submissive on the way back to the lodgings. As they left the car and climbed the hill he said to the other:

"Isn't it darker, sir? A cloud over the sun? I seem to see shadows."

"It's only one o'clock, Captain, but it's been a hard walk for you. Now you'll have to lie down. I'll get Nella to fix that medicine the young doctor left for you."

"Yes. I'll rest. Lawrence should be here before night. I'm going to make a bit of ceremony of it, sir. You see, we parted in rather bad blood. My son was a wild fellow, but after Bamboang—well"—the veteran twisted the worn leather and faded silk about the scabbard—"I'm going to present him his father's sword. I wore it, sir, at Kenesaw."

He would not undress, but lay quietly on the bed in his long blue coat with the double row of buttons. After a while the young man stole to the bed with a blanket, laying it about him. The old man stirred.

"Thank you. I am content. You will awaken me if I should drop off—when he comes?"

"Yes. But, Captain, maybe he's delayed—you know I said, perhaps—"

"I'll wait, sir. He should be here before dark."

The young man turned away: "Yes, yes—I suppose!"—but in the hall he murmured, "I've done it now—I've done it!"

He went to his rooms at the front. The sunlight on the balcony was bright; the afternoon trade winds were rising with a fillip of dust in the cool streets, lacing fog into the purple mountains across the Golden Gate. Moodily from the windows Arnold watched the North. The day had curiously tired him; he felt detached, alone, with the sense of failure. He had not worked to-day, after a week with the cement layers in the foundations of the bank building, because yesterday the union men had objected, and the contractor had laid him off, saying he should be sent for if the matter was adjusted. Arnold had applied for membership in the union—for the time he must work, the household being at an extremity.

He remembered the Captain's medicine and went to the kitchen at the rear for a glass of water. Nella rose hurriedly as he entered. He stared at her and consciously she glanced down over her borrowed finery—the brown silk skirt, the lace of the ill-fitting waist a bit soiled. Her eyes were very bright, her cheeks more full, the lips arched. Under the hat of black plumes and beaded stuff she was pretty.

"Why, Nel!" he started from his survey of this new

setting—for weeks he had seen her in nothing but haphazard house gowns and gay kimonos—"Nel!"

"Has he come?" she asked intently.

"Who?"

"Larry?"

His start, the significance of the look in his eyes, stirred her to a sharp advance on him.

"He hasn't? Good God, is that old man disappointed again?"

"Nel, you dressed for him—his coming?"

"Why, yes—I looked a fright. I borrowed this of Bernice. I just got wild thinking of how I'd let everything go this summer. But where is he?"

The young man did not answer; he appeared to be listening at the attic stairs.

"Come to my rooms," he said, and she followed him, the borrowed silks rustling in the stillness.

He took her hands and looked at her so gravely that she was in confusion. "See here—Larry Calhoun is dead."

She shrugged her shoulders as if in pain. "Dead? Does the old fellow know?"

"No. Nel, I've made an awful tangle of this. Larry's been dead a year, and he's no hero. He was as wild a chap in the service as I was, and no one ever picked me for promotion or honor medals."

Nella checked a sharp little laugh; she turned away. "Well, I might have known—of course it was something!" She sat down and took off the plumed hat and smoothed out the borrowed skirt. "Yes, everything goes that way."

"I should have told you long ago," Arnold added,

"but I never dreamed it would come to this—the old man waiting and you—caring so!"

"I suppose you think I'm crazy," she went on apathetically, "telling you I loved a man I never saw! And a *dishonor* man, you say? Well, somehow, I might have known!"

He started at the hardness of her laugh.

"Don't you mind," she went on, "only 'most everything I ever cared for went this way. He was so real and brave to hear you tell of him. That's all. What'll we do with the old man now?"

"I don't know. He's played out to-night. To-morrow—some way or other."

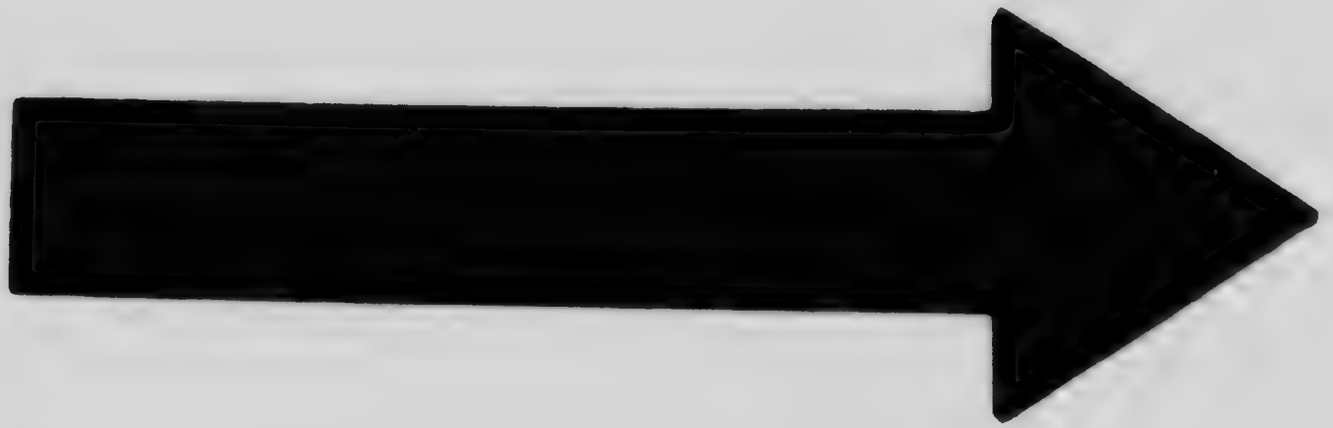
"It'll kill him, Hammy. We'd better get the army people to take him to the Presidio hospital. O, I'm afraid you've muddled things, boy!"

He answered sadly: "I know."

"Well," she went on, "after all, it doesn't matter. Only I waited for that soldier fellow. It kept me here and quiet when I was miserable. Seems like all my life I've been trying for something or some one—just trying, and nothing came of it. First, there was Eddie, and he killed himself—" she shook off the tremble in her voice. "O, well—now I can drift on!"

"No," Arnold retorted, and it drove the pretense from her eyes; "you've been true for eight months to what? Something you thought was fine, an *ideal*—a dream—a love."

She shivered. "Don't—it scares me—he's dead—and he wasn't a hero anyway." She went on petulantly: "You can go talk that way to other women, but not me. I'm like yourself—something's dead in me—



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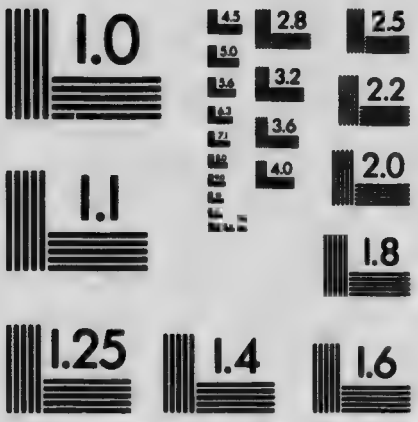

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nothing matters." She rose with her old Gipsy abandon, her careless laugh rang out. "O, don't mind me, boy! You've been square with me always. I'd have thought all men were sneaks if it hadn't been for you. And I wanted to do something for you, too; you tried your best for me. That means a lot—to cling to, to fight back with what little good there is in one—like us."

He watched her, marveling at her truth. Yes, they knew the way of the beaten; always they would have to go the lower path, try what they might with aching hearts and sore hands and weary heads—that would be the fulfilment of their lives. One can not bring back the luster to the lily windwhipped to the earth.

As he watched her unanswering, there came a sound of metal struck. It came again as they listened. "Perhaps his sword has fallen," Arnold said and tiptoed to the hall. Then he went above.

The girl went to the balcony. Down the street she saw a crowd of children, a slattern wife or two, and hastening from them Kohamma, the wife of the Japanese shoemaker, in whose charge Nella was wont to leave the waif of Granberry's when she went out of afternoons. The little brown woman held her own sloe-eyed infant, but Bill, the Cookhouse Kid, was not with her. Nella ran to meet her in some alarm, conscious that down the street the neighbor women leveled at her the hostile eyes of the bourgeoisie—always they had hated her, always isolated her in scorn. "Look here," she cried to Kohamma, "my boy—they—*they* took him?"

"Tey come," the Japanese woman nodded frighten-

edly, "law man—officer. Tey look for you—tey read papers—tey take baby."

"The kid!" Nel flashed; "I knew!"

"Law man say you come court tomallo—nex' week —mebbe. I dun-no." She held forth a document, a court order directing that the woods waif be taken over by the Home Finding Society until an inquiry could be made as to the fitness of its guardians. Nella's eyes went to the triumph of her enemies in the street in long hate, then she seized the papers and without a word ran back to the rooms.

They were cleaner than they had ever been, in honor of the absent guest. This week she had given long hours laughingly, in a sort of dream, to the care of the house—the woodwork and the glass shone with a grim expectance, stealthily watching her from wall and angle. In the hallrack was the blue sweater of Bill, the woods waif.

The girl looked at it in some trouble. "Well, it's best—maybe. Everything's going now. The Captain to the hospital to-morrow, and then Hammy North to the range. Well, it's all in the game, and I can quit, too."

The little pot with the hyacinth bulb which Frank Arasaka had given Miss Granberry last winter stood in the kitchen window; it had never blossomed. The girl took it to Arnold's rooms and set it on the table by the greenshaded student lamp. "Granny said to give it to him when it bloomed." Then she added, "Well, maybe it tried and hadn't a chance."

In the man's apartments she had, that day, set a small table for two, with the choicest silver and most

delicate cups from his collection. About them was trailed a wisp of wistaria which she had stolen from Portsmouth Square to array the board for the home-coming soldier of Samar. Nella studied the effect for some time; then she put the stunted hyacinth by Arnold's plate and wrote, with some effort, on a tablet which she laid near it. Then looking again, with quiet attention, at the wistaria among the silver, she stole to the stairs in the hall and listened. There was no sound. She went to the street.

CHAPTER XXV

At four o'clock Grace Wayne was writing at a desk in her alcove room. It was a day of winds, bleak midsummer, and a fire burned in the apartment beyond, where Sylvia Spring was reading. The woman looked up.

"I'm writing to Mr. Banway, to tell him that you'll sail on the second. And—shall I add a word from you?"

The girl turned with a smile; through the weeks of her convalescence she had had the unvarying sweetness of a tired child for the older woman. "Tell him I'm coming—thank him and all the boys in the camps up there—they've been so good always." She fell to watching the drift of fog through the San Bruno Passes above the Mission; from this high window one saw the clouds drown the suburbs and flow on to the bay. "And you—how could I ever thank you?"

Miss Wayne put down the pen and came to take the other's hands. Through weeks of such human service as she had never known, through days and nights, she had listened to Sylvia's brainsick enshrining of John Arnold's memory; long she had studied this fantastic faith until the days of returning reason and acceptance. She wondered at herself, at the patience, the gentleness she had given to this humble duty, this common way, at the happiness she had found in this work of her

hands—the giving all to ask nothing. It was strange, this service to which the mystic had come to give her untried strength. Banway, the woodsman, who had stayed near them in the city until Sylvia's recovery was assured, had parted with her in a prophecy when he went North. "I heard you preach once," he said, out of his brooding tenderness for the two women; "I couldn't unde'stand—no man could unde'stand, fo' it seemed triflin' an' beyond them all. But now I see why men stop to listen to you on the street—the grand voice and you' face. You had some otheh way to A'mighty—that's all. You was fitten an' you was called."

She sent him away with a smile he did not understand—a pathos from her own gratefulness at this first praise men had ever given her. She had descended from the infinite that needs no concern to a service of the world and had found its sweetness.

And now, with a sense of loss for the ending, she went on, to Sylvia's apathetic ear. "I'm to go to Seattle and sail for Australia next month. Dear heart—I've come to care so for you, but you'd better go. You see," she smiled and continued slowly, "I have no one on earth whom I know particularly—no relation, friend. It's hard to tell what you've meant to me. I'm grateful that you came—with your sorrow."

Since Sylvia's return from her fantasies, they had not adverted to the tragic year of her life.

"Yes, it's best," the country girl mused. "I'm well—and I'm forgetting, seems like. And up-in-back it'll be pretty when the rains come. You don't know the trails and hills where he—where we—" She put her hand to her eyes which had now a trifle of her fever's

vagueness—"but up there seems like I could rest—just sleep and forget."

Grace Wayne's strength seemed to have been her refuge; in the days when the phantoms lingered she had come as now to seek the other woman's hands, her cool voice, her serenity. And as they had done for weeks they sat in the quiet room watching the fogs ride through the passes.

At five o'clock the house telephone announced a caller for Miss Wayne. She asked a question, hesitated, looking back at the girl from the reception-room, and then assented. A few minutes later she admitted the visitor. Nella Free stood in some conscious defiance at the door, then she went on with directness.

"Well, I came again. I wanted to know how she was. How is she now?"

Grace warned her to a lower voice; the girl in the room beyond had let the book fall from her hand and was gazing out the window.

"Be seated," the older woman motioned Nella to a chair. "Yes, she is very well. And going home Friday by the steamer."

Nella stirred. "Yes? And that will end it all?"

"End it all?"

The caller had been three times before to ask of the sick girl; of herself and Arnold she had said nothing, and Grace Wayne had not inquired. Nella went on musingly. "Seems like a pity. She was the only good girl who ever cared for him I think—seems to me she could help him on. I tell you, he's tried—O, he's tried!"

She gathered herself against the strength of the other woman and hiding this resolution beneath a show

of nonchalance, continued: "It's just this—he's losing, and he's tried. Everything's slipped away from him somehow—everything that held him fighting for us all. And he's not a man who can drift alone—I don't think he's ever forgotten Sylvia. I guess he loved her, after all."

She saw no change in the calm face before her, and went on with a rising appeal: "I thought you'd understand—he trusted you, and you threw him off. He seemed to think you'd help, but you sent him away and wouldn't let him have his chance."

The older woman stirred at the recital; then she answered.

"He was beyond redemption. He—well, you know the story—" she had pointed to the fire-lighted room beyond. "Out of all his life I could have forgiven everything but that." She hurried on as if checking a passional confidence that would rise in her. "He lied at the moment I thought he was most fine—most true to the best in him."

"You believed it all," Nella muttered; "you never let him have his chance!"

The mystic watched her trouble: "Why did you come to me with this?"

"Because you were his chance," the girl retorted. "It would take a decent woman to help him—and you were the only one he knew!"

She could not guess the conflict in the other who had no answer. And for a long time they were still, watching each other across the room with no common ground on which to meet the issue. On this silence Sylvia, beyond, by the window, spoke and then came out to them.

She had a trace of surprise, and then a fluttering cry broke from her.

"You? Seems like I've seen you!"

Grace Wayne's warning hand was too late. "Yes," Nella answered, "you have."

The other girl put her hand to her head bewilderedly. "And in that crazy old house—seems like things are clearing that have been so confused since I was sick. You—I saw you down-stairs—you spoke with him!"

"Yes," Nella retorted, "and now go on—you'll have to remember!"

"What do you mean?" Grace interposed. "That night? Sylvia, we've never asked you all."

"Go on," Nella muttered. "You saw me at Sedaini's—and then what?"

"I remember that old house in the rain—and there were two children sleeping in his rooms so he made me a place on a great red and green rug. And then he went away."

They watched her groping back to awakening memory. "And then it was a beautiful morning and I found him asleep on the balcony all wet with dew and I threw my violets on him."

"Go on!" It was Grace who spoke now, her eyes bright on the other, her breath hard with eagerness—"Sylvia! Go on!"

"That's all. That day something terrible happened—he came back to me down-town, stern and white—he gave me back my money and left me."

"Your money?"

"I didn't take it. I left it with him—ten thousand dollars in a little silk case."

Grace turned from them to find in the darkened window a vision of a night—a drunken outcast picked from the street—a silken case that she had tried to secure for him—his blithe lying, his rebuffing jest. Suddenly she turned on them crying out: "Yes—tell me? Was that all—*all?*"

The country girl stared at her frightened. "Yes—he just left me."

"I knew," Nella muttered, and she rose grimly triumphant. "I've never doubted—somehow, I know him so well. And he's been pretty crooked, too." She flashed past them to the hall, drawing her cloak about her with a defiant flirt. "I knew his very worst."

Grace had come swiftly after her: "Be still. Nella—wait!"

The visitor thrust her chin out with a careless grimace: "Yes?"

"Where are you going?"

"O, drift around." She laughed. "I've quit up there. There's nothing for me to do." Then she menaced the other with audacious bitterness: "I told you I believed, and you *didn't*. See here—if he loves that girl, you'd better be square with them. She'd go to him—and he needs some one."

"Nella, I don't think she cares now—she—" her voice was swept by a feeling Nella had never known in her—"O, the fool! the fool—to throw away his chance so splendidly! Nel, you're right—he came to me, and I turned him away. He believed me and I—ah, well—he shall know now!"

Nella looked in astonishment at her vehemence, the outpouring of some high fervor catching up her strength, her purpose, binding to some single resolve all the dramatic personality masked by her soul's serene shield. She could not understand her crossing the outer room to switch the light and stand before her mirror, her eyes more bright, her cheeks flushed, her long body tense with a splendid eagerness, her slim hands up to the heavy masses of her hair. "O, it is I—*I* who failed! O, Nel, you're teaching me!"

They watched her, one from within the room and one at the threshold, in wonder; and then Nella caught at the underflow of this feeling, guessing through the intricate defiles of the other's heart. She turned: "And *you?* That's why he *believed* in you! I wondered—O, I wondered why you should hurt him so! But you'll have to bring them to each other."

Grace turned her eyes on the other in a high pity: "Did you think I feared? Nel, did you think I need fear?"

. . other girl watched them in misunderstanding.

Half an hour later Bernice Murasky, at the Clifford, was surprised to have Nella walk in on her wearing the borrowed gown, but carrying a suit-case and a bundle wrapped in newspapers. The caller dropped her burdens on the floor, and sat across from the old-time friend with a whimsical laugh.

"See here, Bernice, can I stay all night? My proposition is off for to-night."

"Sure," the other girl laughed, in return at Nel's

flash of energy at odds with her usual indolence. "Stay long as you please. Didn't the things fit you?"

"O, they're all right. But I just quit Granny's. There's nothing to hang around for now. Have you got any Vermouth? Let's make a Martini!"

Miss Murasky eyed her friend with the town's shrewd reading.

"O, of course, if you've had any trouble with any one, why, stay with me till you get on. Nel, you used to be awful good to me in the old days. But I've not seen you for ages—you must have been getting religion from that preacher friend of Jack Arnold's. Does she ever buzz you about your soul?"

Nella laughed. "She says it can't be harmed. Well, if it can't, why, I'm all right, I suppose. O, what's the use of wrangling about it, Kid!"

Bernice joined her merriment. "Yes. We'll go eat at Green's to-night and charge it to Louis. You look good enough in that waist, but gracious, the pretty things you used to have!"

"Yes," answered the other girl patiently, "and I don't see any use of me looking like a fright for ever."

Nel went down-town to buy a pair of gloves with a borrowed five dollars while Miss Murasky finished her toilet. She loitered on with the people, feeling a new, buoyant freedom, and stopped before a shop window where a wondrous gown was shown. She needed a dress, and loved pretty things, and looked critically at this. Then she thought of her little sister at Notre Dame—she had promised her a white dress for confirmation.

She idled again before the gown, studying its prob-

able cost; then she saw her face in the mirror beyond. She decided intently that she was, after all, prettier than ever, her cheeks more full and preened with bird-like twists of her white throat before the glass. Then she noticed the rough places on her hands and rubbed them interestedly—they recalled the curious weeks now past.

"If any one ever cared enough," she mused, "I'd love to fix a little table like that, with wistaria among the silver."

She idled on from the gown in the window. Pretty things cost money. She drifted on, a leaf in the storm, lost now in the enveloping crowds of the street.

CHAPTER XXVI

Arnold came to his rooms after an hour at the old man's side. He had thought much and little had cleared; only it must be things were shaping to some end and soon. The sight of the old squadron had stirred a new and acute sorriness. The soul of other days and great resolves came back with the passing troop; he must find them all again, somewhere, somehow—it did not matter so that he again might be simple of heart, carefree, lifting his hand to a comrade in the open as Bemis of Troop B had done to-day, passing on the march. His crush of impressions had left him dulled, but through them a nameless hope stirred.

Because of his intent he did not discover, for a time, on the rack near his door, a single rose, red on its long stem. Wonderingly he lifted it to find among the leaves a card. It read:

I called for you at six. I know now. I am coming again to-night. GRACE WAYNE.

He stood in some confusion after he had carried the flower to the table, lighted the lamp and again read the message.

But his mind linked her call at once with Sylvia, the tragedy he had made of this life, and of that he had

long refused to think—he had convicted himself of it, he was paying for it all. He had made his fight and lost; never would he find the inviolate peace of the victor; he had passed the dead line from the bright world above. Well, he would go his way, alone—that was what he had long told himself; he would be beyond the need of comfort or support—after all, with rough hands and human lapses, a man must build his own temple if it were but a heap of dirt above the plain.

When he laid the great rose on the table he saw the tablet on which Nella had scratched—by the little brown Japanese pot with the hyacinth bulb.

The girl had written: "Hammy, I'm quitting you to-night. If the old soldier goes to the Presidio, as you said, you won't need me. And I'm giving you the hyacinth. Granny said to, if it would ever bloom."

It had not. In the cheap little jar it had no light, no sweetness, no gift of color or perfume—the town had killed its soul.

The young man sat in the chair across from the table. He looked at the two messages—beside the imperial splendor of the mystic's gift the hyacinth was a bit of gray choked by the dirt.

He read again Nella's scrawl. "I don't believe it," he muttered. "She's fooling—she couldn't leave me so!"

He went to the long windows and looked down at the city, the red interstices of the streets between the monolithic blackness of the blocks. For weeks he had felt cut off, an alien from the surge of its life. All that he had known, lived, fought was there. It seemed, presently, that two paths stretched from him out to its

fulguration and beyond, and he knew not which to follow.

The wind was noisy in the gables. The watcher fancied that he heard a stir without, steps coming lightly along the hall. He started, glancing at the door, at the splendid rose, red with a queen's robing, subduing the room. He listened again for the steps, then with a quick reach, a look at the hyacinth, he tossed the great rose the room's length, to the shadow of the tinsel god.

"Nella, is that you?" But opening the door he stared into the empty hall. The lodgings were still and expectantly clean. He was puzzled by the stealth, the shadows. After a while he went above and found the Captain watching the last light which to him was a mere dulling of the opaque sphere. The veteran noted his presence.

"Sir, I have something to say."

"Yes."

"When we were in Union Square to-day, was it cloudy or was the sun shining? It seemed my eyes cleared a bit—I could almost make out the monument of Victory—wasn't there something moving above the figure?"

"Moving? The bronze Victory has a wreath and a trident."

"No. There was a blur of color above the shaft—dazzling—as of a sword in the sun. Eh, sir?"

"Captain, the sun was very bright."

"Well, well—my eyes, I suppose—my old eyes. It will soon be taps for me—it's best the boy is coming home—a soldier now, after that affair at Bamboang."

The old man sank lower on the pillows. By now the room was dark with a filter of young moonlight on the roofs without. After a while he turned from the window: "Are you still there, sir? I have something more to say."

"I'm here, Captain."

"You have been kind to me. I'll hardly need you, now that Lawrence is here, but I wish to thank you. I may have been harsh at times—I disliked you—the town's light ways—the women you knew—your idleness. I am frank, sir—but after you came home from the war and Lawrence stayed, you were kind to me. I doubted you and you were patient."

"Captain, it is nothing. Larry and I were bunkies, and I promised him I'd look to you."

"You have done well." The soldier's fingers were stealing across the coverlet. "My sword, sir—will you place it nearer?"

The watcher closed the other's hand on the naked steel. One was hardly less cold than the other, but the old man's face spoke peace.

"Would you mind buckling the belt about me? I wish to be dressed, erect when he comes—eh, sir? The honor of the service!"

"The honor of the service, Captain."

"Listen!" The veteran raised his fingers. "Is that the band?"

They waited. "No," said Arnold, "the wind in the balcony."

"But isn't there a step in the hall?"

"Captain, it's only a shingle flapping."

The old man laid back. "I heard music, sir. A

march that was played before the capitol. We were two hundred thousand in the line, and I led the regiment, for no man above me had lived to see that day. It seems lighter—isn't it nearly morning?"

"It's only seven o'clock. You rest, Captain—I'll be back."

The younger man went below, searching for Nella. He lighted the dim hall gas, wondering suddenly where the child might be. The cringing dog came out of the shadows to his feet.

"Old lad," Arnold murmured, "where are they? She surely isn't gone. She never failed to be here to get supper for us all—the kid and you and me."

He was hungry, having eaten nothing since morning; and confused by his sense of defeats. He wanted to ask a way—surely a woman could devise a pretext that would avert the tragedy of the Captain's dream to-morrow. The pup thrust a cold nose to his hand as they stood in the passage. It comforted him with a sense of faith remaining. He had reached a hand here, there through the dark to whatever common good was about him, and each human contact had dissolved—he had found nothing, bound nothing; he had been stripped to his soul of even the mean gifts with which he had begun. Another day and even the gray house from which he had watched his retreat, step by step, losing his battles at every turn, would reject him; he would stand alone in the town that had no place for him in all its life, the evil or the good.

Looking again in his rooms, the little hyacinth a blur in the young moonlight, he went slowly up the stairs. There, by the Captain's side, at least he might find a

hand put to his, even the hand of a dying man. At least here he did not fear—he could look the old man in the eyes, stand erect before his judgment as he might his father's. So, in the dusk, he went above.

The Captain was as he had left him, on his back, his hands clasped on the sword hilt on his faded sash.

But he was dead.

The younger man watched quietly after the first touch to his hands. The face was peaceful, its familiar frown relaxing, the bushy brows concealing the scar, the gray imperial lending its martial artifice—the soldier's grandeur encompassed the chamber's gloom and gave to the watcher peace. He sat on the bed arranging the sword-knot in the veteran's fingers, smoothing the coat between the little eagles of the republic. A great campaign was ended, a voyage done.

Through the dark the Lime Point fog-horn moaned; from the window he saw the thin drift across the crescent moon. He was alone, indeed; one by one they had dropped from him, Granny, the children, Nella, Lawrence Calhoun's father. He had been a reckless fighter, a careless, jesting leader; and one by one, fate had wrested from him whatever hostages had held him to the faint good in him. Well, no matter—he had fought and the long campaign was done.

For hours he sat alone, the dead soldier's peace on him as a benediction. He grew great with a thought that his leader had come back; and that with him, another presence had come in judgment—his father, who had put his faith in him and sent him from the prison's gate, content.

The watcher took the Captain's sword from his dead

fingers and set it against the wall, where the moonlight fell on it until it was a bar of silver in the dusk. Through his mind there came a thing he had read, he knew not when, nor where:

"This man was one of those old fighting fellows
Whose soul did choose to follow the Great Captain,
And so he passed out into the darkness—
What did he win but darkness?
Ask the Captain—
You'll find the Captain out there in the darkness."

And as he watched through the hours, there came to him a remembrance that this was the festal day of the ancient *Samurai,* of which Arasaka had once told him—the vigil in which only those may face the fighting men who have made clear their honor—The Day of Souls.

A vision came to his eyes; he seemed to be with the Captain in the moonlight-flooded square. They saw the Victory rising from its white shaft above the night, immutable, serene, triumphant.

A sound came from the rooms below. Arnold listened by the staircase window, his eyes on the glimmering flood-tide through the Gate, and the Marin Mountains that lay beyond like a heap of crushed velvet in the dark. The floor creaked, and as he went down, an exclamation came from the front rooms. There he found Nella. She was lighting his student lamp, and looked up from it with startled eyes. Then she laughed.

"I came back," she went on with her usual abrupt

lightness. "I went out to Sheehan's and the Beach and danced. There were a lot of us—Bernice and Louis, in his car—and the boys bought a lot of champagne." Her inconsequent laugh rang out. "But it's funny—I couldn't 'make believe' any more, like the old days. I'm a fool, I suppose, but I got to thinking who'd get the Captain's breakfast—and at one o'clock I skipped."

"I was expecting you," he answered.

"Expecting? Why, didn't the woman preacher tell you I'd quit? And my note? I came back to get breakfast to-morrow—that's all. Ham, how's the Captain?"

"Come," he said, and took her hand, drawing her to the stairs.

She did not know until he placed her hand on the soldier's, and then she fell back with a cry and stood staring.

"It's fine," the young man whispered, "Nel, I've been here alone five hours."

"Alone?"

"Yes. Did you think I'd bring a lot of gabblin' women from the block to disturb that picture? To-morrow we'll tell the Presidio people, and they'll bury him with the soldiers out there. But to-night—he's alone. It's fine."

Nella sat in the window-seat, with the moonlight on her borrowed plumes and the silken skirt. "Kid, you're changed so," she whispered.

He smiled. "Have I? I've thought of something to change a man."

She did not understand: "Then you saw them—that preacher woman brought Sylvia to you after all?"

He started. "To me? What have you been doing?"

"She said she'd bring her to you—if she did, I'd believe a good deal in religion." She laughed slightly. "But you can't understand, Hammy!"

He was beyond giving concern to women to-night; he went on gravely. "An hour ago I remembered what this night meant—the old fighting men are coming back. I'm not afraid of anything they can ask us."

His mood frightened her. "Who?" she whispered. "Ask what?"

"It's an old story, Nel. But we'd have to come clean to-night to face the fighting men."

She shivered in the stillness. But after a while, as they sat long, with the murmur of the city far off and the beauty of the night over the sea and land from the windows, the girl rose and went to the Captain's side.

She stood for many minutes. "It's grand," she whispered. "Just peace."

CHAPTER XXVII

An hour later Arnold heard the wheels of a carriage turn on the cobbles below the balcony. He went to the windows to peer out. On the broad seat Nella slept. Tired out by the excitement of the day, confused by the night's mysteries, she would not have stayed awake for a vision of paradise. Yet her unfearing now, in the room with the dead man, struck Arnold as odd. He left them and went below.

On the stairs from the street he met Grace Wayne in no surprise, for it could be none other. She gave him her hand with a smile high in faith, as if now, in common understanding, words were little.

"It's a strange hour to come," she began, "but you know how I always loved the night—its peace and consecration. Will you understand me if I say I've tried to come in that spirit? I know everything, now, I think."

"Nel told me," he answered, and then in a sort of fear, "Sylvia—and she—she is well, and you brought her—"

"She is here." The woman looked proudly at him. "She did not want to come—she seemed to fear you, but I told her it was for something more than herself—to clear up much so that each of us could be steadfast—so that all pretense could be put away. Do you understand me?"

"Good God," he muttered, starting, "you brought her! Look here—what can I say or do?"

"Nel thought you loved her."

"No," he answered, "she was as far beyond me as th stars. I tell you, I've got to go another way—not fine a way, but I earned it; not so pure a way, maybe- but I fought for it. I know the cost."

He could not guess the tumult sweeping her, risin above her own doubts and weariness, stamping i dubitably her faith in him. He only saw her face the half-light, calm, resolute in tenderness. She we on in this sweet dignity, yet as if humbled before hin "To-night I learned everything from her—all she ha been to you. I know, too, that I lost her money th night I met you. I have, to-day, repaid her everythin It has freed you—freed me. I think we are both mo honest now." She smiled in a rare intimacy and was troubled. "We've learned much, haven't we, John It seems that I have had to come to your life, yo wo ld, to learn!"

He tried to evade her confidence. An hour ago h way had seemed clear and comforting—now he wa dered in intricate irresolutions.

Grace went on clearly: "Well, I brought her. It w for my conscience's sake and yours. She waited in t carriage. Can you face her?"

"Yes," he said, "after all, I'm not afraid." But wh he had gone to the street he had a strange dread, f Sylvia stood before him as he had brought her these steps on that first night, her eyes wide, her gir face pretty, unscathed, her hand to her hair with t old doubtful trick, as when she listened to the whi sical speeches of his love-making. She brought th summer to him, the North stillness, the secret plac

of the redwood cañons tangling the drift of fog from the Mendocino coast—and beyond was the country-up-in-back, the dry smell and quiver of the tawny hills under the sun. She stood now, the beautiful spirit of it all, pure before the stain and tatter of his life.

He moved as if to take her hand and then turned away. "Sylvia!"

"You don't want to speak, John, do you?" she began softly. "Now, let's just forget. I'm going home—I only came because she wanted me to." The girl came nearer. "You look so changed—much older. I'm sorry—it was intended so, I suppose. And I forgive you."

He had not looked for this simplicity of courage. It struck him to the heart as no tears nor reproach could have hurt him. "I've tried," he muttered. "Sylvia, you began it all—it was you that first began the fight. Ah, well, little girl, I wish I knew what to say. It would sound cheap to tell you I'm sorry. There's nothing I can say—you're fine and true—" He looked beyond her to the gray house in the dark, that had sheltered him and his sore hurts and failures—no, he could never make her understand the gulf between her simplicity and his misrule. He turned away again. "And now you're going home. Sylvia, I wish I could talk more to you, but I can't. Don't you understand—something's dead in me."

"No—" she whispered—"but see, I'm crying and I promised I wouldn't! No, let me go. I'll sail tomorrow for the North." She went to the carriage door and turned: "John, let's just be glad that we discovered we weren't for each other."

He let her go from him in this show of courage, and

went up the stairs to meet Grace on the balcony. She watched him expectantly. "It's done," she said, "and it's best. You've cut another bond to the old life, the old memories. John Arnold, it's not how a man's lived, nor what he's done but what he brings through it all that counts."

He wondered at this new faith, or perhaps her old newly seen. Out of her fullness of power, disengaging to him a tenderness he had never felt, it seemed that, after all, she had not been so far from him or his world. But he answered quietly: "Yes. And I've brought through little. I can show it all so easily. Now, I know I'll never find the highest way, the heights you tried to lead me to But there's something else for a man." And as she seemed uncomprehending, he added: "Come, I'll show you what I mean."

She went with him, as Nella had done, to the Captain's chamber. She nodded in surprise, after bending above the dead man; then she saw Nella in the window-seat.

"This is the night the fighting men come back," Arnold smiled to her. "No man dares face them with his soul unclean. See here—we've waited and Nel has even slept—and no sign has come. It's been all night just as she said—just peace."

"O, what is in you?" the mystic cried, under her breath. "After all, are you a dreamer, awaiting symbols?"

"No," he retorted; "just a fellow who's finding the way for himself. Not your way nor the way of any faith or creed or system—just his own way hammered out—and I tell you it cost something."

It seemed that her exalted passion sank beneath his mood. They sat in the silent room. An hour passed; the fog drifted from the Gate; the stars wheeled low on the Marin Hills, a spangle of light in a cloudy pass. They thought the day was near at last, yet it was only an expectance in the summer night. After a while Nella shivered in the cool air and Arnold went to throw a robe about her. He found Grace at his side; their hands met in the common service. She smiled.

"You are a believer in mysteries—I told you so long ago," she whispered. "I tried to plead with you to make that clear—then nothing else would have mattered."

He saw her face, steadfast in its old tenderness. She could not hide this indwelling triumph—this was the symbol of their progression—to watch for the new day in this communion on the hilltop. This had been his way, his upward coming through the last doubt and fear—he was with her in understanding. He would even know that she loved him—that the red flame of his life had burned away her own false barriers, had torn the idle wrappings from her selfness, had freed her for a human service. Yes, he had broken through the splendid hollow globe of her spiritual aloofness, and miraculously his flame of life had burned itself clear. This, indeed, must be their symbol—to stand here together in this common work. She looked on him with triumphing faith. But after a while he spoke in serious authority: "It must be toward morning—and there's Sylvia waiting for you."

"I know," she answered, "but this has been a wonderful hour for you. And for me—for all of us."

He smiled gratefully at her apparent understanding. "Yes, we can go on now. It's like a home-coming to me—to Nel and me."

She watched him go to raise the curtain above the sleeping girl and look off to the East. Some divination came to her. "Nel? I wondered what you would do about her, when you go to the hills—to find yourself—as you promised me."

"There's a way," he answered, "and I'm finding it. Nel's tried and she's not failed. No, in nothing has she failed," he added. "After this, nothing could matter."

"I don't understand you, John?"

"I've been working this week. It's at the foundation for the Mutual Bank Building. I'm a cement mixer's helper, and I get a dollar and seventy-five cents a day. And those fellows are going to get me in their union, too. It's only a hole, but I can look up and see the sky. Seems like I'd been about this town all my life and never knew before how blue the sky is!" He turned to her with a smile. "I'm not going to quit the town. And Nel, she's the only woman who could understand—she's paid the price with me. And I'm pretty weak and wild. Suppose I lost my hold and went down after all—who'd understand, save Nel?"

The mystic's eyes did not waver from his face.

"You mean?" she questioned, clearly but low. "Tell me?"

"Nel's only what life makes her—and she's tried."

Slowly the splendor darkened, the faith was humbled in the other's soul.

"Is this your way of happiness? John, is this the way—for you?"

"A man does not need happiness. He can make his own conditions, if he's big enough. And I'm big enough. A fellow has to fail to understand. Yes, I'm big enough, I tell you."

Grace had turned to watch out the balcony window the transfiguration of the night. She stepped past the girl's form to the cool air. It was, presently, as if she stood alone on the top of the earth, and a new day was born; as though this peace were a fresh page, on which, in another hour, would be written the drama of the world. Huge, real, exquisite with issues; but through these common lives of men were beaten ways divine, mystic as her own. Yes, there was divinity, human-rough and stained, as there was a Christ who had lived the world's life, and who had died with the weak, on His lips a cry, unfortified by the complacence of the Infinite.

She looked now on the girl at her feet, on the man beyond. She had come an untroubled traverse, calmly awaiting all the good of life, of all lives and phases and transmutations; for to the soul awakened, nothing was withheld. And her mystical faith held to him—he had risen, he was affined her own.

But she watched them. They had always doubted, and she had doubted nothing; their ways had stumbled, while hers was secure; they had struggled at desperate costs to pitiful gains, while she had lacked nothing. But out of her tideless soul the storm was beating, a passionate certitude claiming him. She saw herself alone as she had always been in the lands and cities and seas of her journeyings, her spiritual adventure—alone and with empty hands. Yes, until now, she had

held herself from life, and, it seemed, had failed. It seemed there was something else needed than the vision of the soul's transcendence, of its mystic mutations and return to Nirvana. It was not for nothing that those shattered, lost in the gulf into which she had curiously looked, cried in their agony but stopped to bind one another's wounds. It was not for nothing that life, with crippled wings, beat a slow way vainly and beyond the pale of the spirit. Now, she saw as she had not seen.

Arnold's voice came to her widening thought. "I want you to know," he said simply, "how you've helped me in the tough old fight. Perhaps you were right—perhaps I'm above all that. The city—I hated it—its life—its men—its savage wars—yes, all society—there was no good in it. But now it seems like something was rising underneath its commonness and corruption, the lies and mobs and pretense. Perhaps you're right—there's a soul rising through it all! I've never believed nor cared—I was only a nameless bit away down at the bottom, but look—I've done something! O, San Francisco! That's what it means, and all America means, and all the fight beyond! We don't die down in the dirt for nothing, do we? I think I know now—I understand all you tried to teach."

She looked on the light of his face; and he saw now in her own, a courage rise, a transfiguring exultation. And with an inarticulate cry she took his hand on the railing. "Go on—you're teaching me! And, O, this is like you—like you! What can't you do—or be?"

"I'm going back the way of men," he muttered. "They'll let me in their union, and maybe some day there'll be something of use for all of them—in me.

"I'm going back the way of men," he muttered. *Page 382.*

Something for what they're after—the social brotherhood, the better way—yes, from *me*, the lone wolf who hated them."

Grace looked at him, laughing curiously; she took his hand again with a child's fine gaiety. "Yes—yes—that is your way!" There was in her a proud and undefeated surety. "And beyond it all, I'll wait for you—love you!" With this she left him, going down the stairs. In the street he heard the carriage turn.

CHAPTER XXVIII

At seven o'clock the sun was high, and above the morning damp on the moldered boards and thin grass of the alley, it fell through the window of the attic in a square of yellow warmth on the floor. The breeze from the ocean over hills and housetops streamed across this patch of sunlight, touching the Captain's face.

The dead man lay alone, untroubled by human ministrations, his fingers stiff in the silken sword-knot, the tricolored button of the Loyal Legion vivid against the dark blue coat. Into this peace—a stillness, yet pervaded by the detached and subtle morning hum of a place of people—a sparrow swept like a gray arrow through the sunlight, circling the room to the headboard of the bed where it lit, jerking a beady eye, now down at the dead man, now up at the window, uncertain of escape, breaking the silence with its shrill call.

From the hall languidly came the cat of the deserted Family Liquor Store to sit in the square of sunlight and blink, cropfull, at the scolding bird. Its slit eyes narrowed in the brightness, opening, closing, until, overcome by the warmth and its animal stupor, it laid to watch the sparrow working itself to fury, hopping and chirping on the bedstead. From the bird's ruffled neck a small feather floated down in intricate spirals to rest on the Captain's cheek; and this little drama went on—the small, gray bird jerking out its insistent

"Chee-it—chee-ya!" the cat outstretched, sheathing and unsheathing its claws in the carpet with benign closings of its black slit eyes in their yellow lakes; while on the cheek of the dead soldier poised the tiny feather, its microscopic fronds exquisite, upright, alive in the buoyant, illimitable ether.

John Arnold came after a while to look on this affair —the play of little life about the majestic dead. The calm, the brilliant day, the mischievous and inconsequent portent of the cat and bird promised cheerily of a large simplicity; they struck down problem and debate, they disdained question beyond the hour and act. So it seemed, one could live, doing away with ghosts and guesses.

A smell of breakfast getting came from the rooms below. In the front apartment was the little table that Nella had set in the sunshine pouring across the balcony on the silver and china trailed about with wistaria. Nella, her hair under a white cap, a snowy apron about her, turned with a droll wonder, rubbing her sleepy eyes.

"See! I set it for the medal man, but it's pretty enough for a bride!"

Laughingly she ran back to the kitchen in that curious pleasure a woman finds in the doing of the small things of a house when there seems above it content. "I'm shirring the eggs," she called. "It's as though things were common and they're not!"

The young man on the balcony watched the banded sky to the west, the bay water like a gray plain of ashes smoking damp, the islands smudged in the levels. "No, they never will be, Nel, if I can help."

She came back with more breakfast . . . "I'd better put on more for fear they might come early," she went on. "Surely, they will be here before the army people take away the Captain."

Arnold turned to her with a sort of threat. "Nel, they're not coming—Miss Wayne and the other girl."

"Not coming? Why, she promised—"

"They've been here," he retorted, "in the night while you slept. And they went away—for good. After all, some things come right."

She opened her blue eyes more widely still. "You sent them away?" she cried, *"you?* Why, I was planning for you and that Sylvia—I thought this table would be pretty for you after all."

She came to read him shrewdly. "Surely you cared—it's best to have some one to believe in—even if it isn't true. Here's that soldier and his medal—he just kept me from going wild. Yes, it's best for a woman to have some one to believe in somewhere. Sometimes, Hammy, I try to guess at things. It's as if we all sat in the dark wondering about each other: why I should be careless Nel, and you so troubled, and the Captain very brave, and that preacher-woman so serene—and all the children down the block so happy. O, I wonder!"

He looked at her—where, indeed, was there place for this careless soul in the world of the spirit? She of the earth, the life that bred in the sun and passed and was content?

"Nothing that lives and works and gives love—the very least of love—is less than the greatest. Nel, you're great as the greatest—do you understand?"

She looked at him with startled, uncomprehending eyes. "What love?" she answered. "I never have. Love who?"

He pointed upward, and after a moment she laughed, a sudden shy gratefulness in her eyes.

"O, an old blind man—and a kiddie that didn't have a home!" she retorted. "What's that amount to?" She went to arrange the silver with hands uncertain in confusion. "But it's just fine to think so." She crossed to him impulsively, her hands out to the lapels of his coat. "Seems like your thinking so has kept me at it all the time. And now—have you given that girl up? And when are you going to the hills?" She watched him dissembling with her old good-humor. "You know the place is sold to the Chinese—we'll have to quit each other and drift somewhere."

"No, I'm not going to have that. Nel, you'll go with me."

She sat back, and while the sparrows twittered in the breeze, she studied the tip of her finger. Then she turned seriously: "Go?—*Live* with you?"

"Marry me. Look here—we've no need of pretense—we know the big old fight. We can keep on trying, chum—somewhere."

"But if we cared," she murmured, "if we only did!"

"It's curious you think of that. Nel, you dreamer—you idealist!"

The girl was still. Presently she sat forward, watching his intent. "A woman must go on and live, I suppose—somehow. But this—no—" she smiled in a distant tenderness. "Hammy, you mustn't mind me. You go to the Sierras as you dreamed, and ride and shoot

and be a man, brown and strong and fine. But for me —why the woods scare me—and I wouldn't wear anything but a French heel for the world!" She thrust before him her small perfectly clad foot. "Look—could that climb a mountain, or ride a broncho? I'd make a fine range rider's wife! O, while you were away some fellow'd come riding over the mountains and I'd flirt with him—" she turned to him with her arch humor. "Kid, I'd go wild. I'm just contrary Nel—and I *couldn't* leave San Francisco!"

"Suppose you loved me?" he answered, and it drove the laughter from her eyes—"suppose you did?"

"I'd climb all the mountains—I'd ride all the dark nights. I'd work my fingers worse than this—" she looked at their scars. "O, love—that would be the greatest thing!"

He watched her steadily as she sat on the balcony rail, a heap of color in the sun, laughing her confused failure to meet his eyes, looking off to the last mist in the harbor way. "There's one thing I've not told you, Nel. I'm going to stick to that job down there—there's something big to hammer out. The boys are to get me into the union, and I'll stay." To her wondering, he went on: "Chum, here's where we made our fight—and lost. And now we'll stay—the city needs its men and women. Yes—" he retorted to her evasion, "you've got to stand by me in the big fight—Nel, you understand?"

Her blue eyes were big with comprehension, growing to an exquisite tenderness. "Just to try and love you sometime?" she whispered, her eyes still wide on him.

"Just to try sometime and go on," he answered. "O, Nel, we can't go far alone!"

She rose softly and through the door she caught up the wistaria from the table and laughingly drifted it about his head. 'O, boy! Just to go on somehow—and let me help? You go be a *man* down there—and let me help? It's grand!"

And, laughing again, she drew his head to her breast and kissed his cheek, laughing, and yet shy with pathos, the voyage done, her own long-wandering heart now humble by the one before her.

In the sunlight they were still, looking in a dream from the height down to the life out of which they had come. But after a while Arnold stirred, leaned to drink in the breeze across the hilltop. "I promised the foreman I'd go help on the second shift at ten o'clock. Nel, I'm going"

"Yes, you must," she whispered, "and I'll have things pretty for you to-night, when you come—home!"

At noon Grace Wayne was on her way to the ferry. At the transfer corner on Market Street, where the tide of life was engulfed by the kindly sun, men were idling about the excavation of the new bank building, watching the descent of a huge steel beam to the foundations of cement where the derrick engine chuttered. She stopped with a sharp intake of breath at the sight of a blue-bloused workman with an arm outstretched above the chaos of steel and concrete. Long she looked, tenderly, triumphantly. The curve of life was fast bearing them far from this brief contact, but her mystic vision went across the span.

"He'll know," she murmured. "Beyond this great way he shall see clearer—he shall know!"

And to her it seemed again that she was looking on a sea of faces in the pit of earth, raised above them under the flare of light; but now, to her words they turned in gladness; she had come to them the lower way, telling the kindlier law for the quickening spirit behind the dull metal they were beating to fine ends. To her wondrous consciousness of God few had come; she had descended to the divinity of all-giving life, the common love she had evaded; and though she went again alone, she was of the great company of those for whom there is no home glow waiting at the end of day, who give all and expect nothing, who love and yet go alone, as the soul must go alone. So, from the dusty roadsides, she found God had come—this was her new evolution, from the common love and infinite failures He had sprung.

The man in the pit of earth looked curiously up in a pause of his work. He saw the blue sky, the brilliant sun shot through with patches of white steam; he heard the throb of the engine drum, the shrilling whistle above the brawl of hammers; he had a glimpse of a woman passing, enveloped by the crowds, the city swarming, eager with life about the foundations where, with brain and hand, to some mysterious end, from the clean earth, men build.

THE END